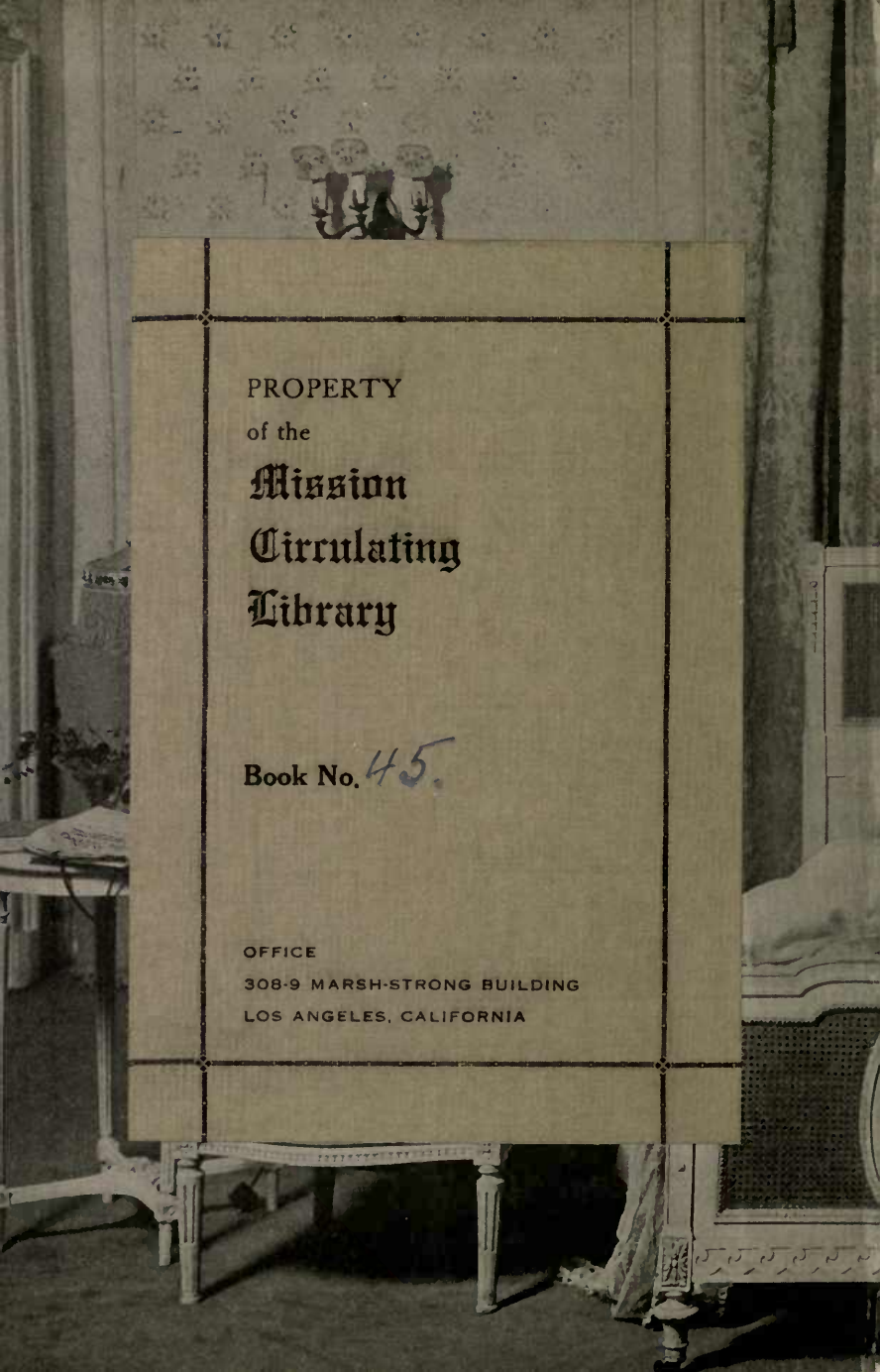
TWIN BEDS

EDWARD SALISBURY FIELD



PROPERTY
of the
Mission
Circulating
Library

Book No. 45.

OFFICE
308-9 MARSH-STRONG BUILDING
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

TWIN BEDS

UNIV. OF CALIF. LIBRARY, LOS ANGELES

TWIN BEDS

By

EDWARD SALISBURY FIELD

Author of

"A Six-Cylinder Courtship," etc.

NEW YORK

W. J. WATT & COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

COPYRIGHT 1913 BY
W. J. WATT & COMPANY

Published July

OTHER NOVELS BY
EDWARD SALISBURY FIELD

THE RENTED EARL
THE PURPLE STOCKINGS
THE SAPPHIRE BRACELET
CUPID'S UNDERSTUDY
A SIX-CYLINDER COURTSHIP

TWIN BEDS

CHAPTER I

I HAD intended buying just an ordinary bed, but the clerk at Howard and Morgan's said twin beds were stylish and everybody was using them. "My wife and I use them," he said, "and we find them a great comfort because I have the habit of kicking in my sleep."

I told him Henry didn't kick, but he was a restless sleeper and maybe twin beds would be a good thing. And he said he was sure I ought to take them, and if they weren't satisfactory I could send them back. So I said: "All right, if that's the case I'll take them and put our bed in Ma's room. For you see Ma

2129495

was coming to visit us and we needed an extra bed for her to sleep in. And then I bought some more furniture, for Henry and I had never furnished the extra room in our flat except to put window shades in it, and matting on the floor.

That night at dinner I told Henry about the twin beds, and he said he'd often seen them in store windows and wondered who used them, but he guessed they must be all right if the clerk at Howard and Morgan's recommended them. And I said the clerk seemed a very intelligent man even if he did kick in his sleep. Besides, we could send the beds back if we didn't like them.

"There's your Ma to consider, though," said Henry.

"What about Ma?" I asked.

"Your Ma's old-fashioned, and she may think it queer our having twin beds."

"Your Ma's old fashioned and she may think it queer our having twin beds"

"Don't you worry about that," I said. "Ma's never been in New York before, and everything will seem queer to her at first."

I hadn't seen Ma for a whole year—not since I'd gone back home for Pa's funeral—and I was never so glad to see anybody in my life. I could tell from the way she clung to me on the platform of the station she was mighty glad to see me, too, for she ain't the demonstrative kind, and never was. You've got to take Ma's love for granted as far as her telling you about it is concerned, but if you were in trouble, or sick, she'd work her fingers to the bone for you, and die for you, too, if necessary, and you knew it. I guess there ain't any better kind of love than that.

Well, Ma kissed Henry, too, and Henry took her trunk-check and gave

it to an expressman, and then we walked around to our flat which is on East 123d Street. And then I got dinner, and we spent the evening talking about things back in Centerville, Ma telling us all the news, which wasn't much except that Charlie Sprague's second wife had come down with typhoid fever from drinking water from a well that had microbes in it, and Evangeline, our Holstein cow, had had a calf which Ma had named Zephyr because there was a cyclone in Ohio the day it was born.

I don't suppose you've ever heard of it, but there's lots worse places than Centerville. It's a little town in Indiana, about thirty miles from Indianapolis, and you can go all the way to Terre Haute from there on a trolley car if you want to, though I've never heard of anybody doing it.

Ma was born and raised in Centerville,

and I was, too. So was Henry, for that matter. But Henry left there when he was eighteen years old, going first to Chicago, and later coming to New York. It was while he was back on a visit to his folks that we fell in love with each other and got married. Pa was alive then, of course, and my sister Lizzie was still in High School. Lizzie's married now, and living 'way out in Montana, and Pa died a year ago last April. That's how we finally got Ma to come on and make us a visit. Poor Ma! She wasn't happy in Centerville any more, or in New York, either, when it comes to that. But she was a lot happier when she left for Centerville last week than she was when she came to us, so I guess New York ain't such a bad place after all.

But to go back to that first night. After Ma had gone to bed, which was early because she was tired, I asked

Henry how he thought she was looking.

"Well," said Henry, "she's certainly a lot deafer than she was."

"Yes, she don't hear anything like as good as she used to," I admitted. You see Ma caught the measles late in life and it sort of settled in her ears.

"And I may be wrong, but she seems kind of worn and broken."

"Don't you believe it," I said. "Ma's just tired out with that long trip; she's got more spirit this minute than you and me put together. Did you notice the way she looked at you when you smoked that cigarette after dinner?"

"No," said Henry, "I wasn't noticing."

"Well, Ma didn't like it, and if I was you I wouldn't smoke any more cigarettes when she's around."

"All right," said Henry. "If you

want the truth, I'm kind of scared of your Ma."

"So am I," I said, and I meant it. For there's no use talking, Ma had a way of looking at you when she thought you were doing wrong that made you feel like thirty cents, even when you knew you had a perfect right to be doing what you were. Nothing would have convinced Ma that smoking cigarettes wasn't as much a crime in its way as arson or highway robbery. But I guess there's lots of women in Indiana who feel the same as Ma; there must be or else the Legislature wouldn't have passed that law sending cigarette-smokers to jail. Just the same, I didn't want Ma's visit to work any hardship on Henry, so I told him if he felt like a cigarette after dinner he could go in our bedroom and smoke out of the window, and he promised he would.

TWIN BEDS

It's funny about Ma. She's only a wisp of a woman, barely coming up to my shoulders, me being five feet four and rather stoutish, though Henry says I'm just right, and I'm sure I'm satisfied if he is. Yet Pa was afraid of Ma, and Pa stood six feet one in his stocking feet, and was as strong as an ox. He had plenty of spirit, too, in certain ways, but not where Ma was concerned. When Ma told him to do a thing, he did it, and that was all there was to it.

Our flat is the kind that's called a push-button flat, which means you push a button in the hall to unlock the front door downstairs. It's on the third floor, too, and isn't very modern; no electric lights —nothing but gas. But it's on a corner, so we get plenty of light and air; also, the rent is reasonable, and we're near the subway, which is convenient.

I showed Ma over the flat next morn-

ing, and she thought it mighty queer to live with one family over you, and two underneath, not to mention the janitor and his wife and five children in the basement. And when she found out I didn't know any of my neighbors except the janitor, she *was* surprised; but I told her nobody knows their neighbors in New York. And she did think it odd about the twin beds. "What are they for?" she asked.

"To sleep in, Ma."

"What did you say, Blanche?"

"I said they're to sleep in."

"But why do you have two beds?"

"It's the fashion, Ma."

"Mighty strange fashion," said Ma. And then she asked me point-blank if Henry and I had quarreled. And when I told her that Henry was the best man in the world, and never a hard word had passed between us since we were mar-

ried, I could see she didn't half-believe me. "But no matter," I thought; "she'll see for herself, living right here in the same flat with us."

That night at dinner when Henry asked her what she thought of New York, she said she was disappointed in it.

"What did you expect, Ma?" asked Henry.

"I don't know," said Ma, "but I expected it would be different."

I knew exactly what she meant, for I'd felt the same way when I first came to New York. So I said: "Never mind, Ma. Living in New York is like having prickly heat; you never really enjoy it, but by-and-by you get used to it."

"I wouldn't live in a place where I couldn't know my neighbors," said Ma. "And I don't think it's healthy to live cooped up like chickens the way you and

Henry do, with nothing but a rubber plant to keep you company. Now in Centerville there's Brush, the dog, and Evangeline and her calf, and Mazourka, the cat, and— Did I tell you, Blanche, that Mazourka had kittens last month? And then there's the trees, and flowers, and the vegetable garden, and—"

"Malaria and mosquitoes," said Henry. "Don't forget them."

"There ain't any malaria in Centerville," declared Ma; "it's the healthiest town for its size in Indiana. I wish you and Blanche would move back there and settle down."

"We can't now, Ma," I said, "but maybe some day—"

"Yes," said Henry, "maybe some day—"

I suppose there's lots of folks who think, like Henry and me, that some day they'll move back to the country, and

enjoy life like they used to; though the chances are if the time ever comes when they can go, they'll have become so used to New York that they won't be happy away from it. Anyway, when I do pray, which ain't as often as it might be, I pray that both me and Henry will keep our simple tastes and not be led astray by Dead Sea apples, which look like apples but ain't, being full of sackcloth and ashes on the inside.

But to get back to Ma. When she got more used to the way we lived she didn't mind it so much; she watered the rubber plant, helped with the cooking and mending, and every afternoon we went to a moving-picture show. So you see, what with the housework and the moving-picture shows, Ma had plenty to occupy her mind; and though she didn't like New York at first, before she'd been with us three days she'd perked up a lot, and

become quite cheerful. Ma liked change and excitement as well as the next one. And there was plenty of excitement ahead of her—plenty! Only, of course, I didn't know it at the time.

And now we come to Ma's first Saturday night with us. Well, Saturday, after dinner, Henry went out. He always goes out Saturday nights; it's an arrangement we made when we were first married: every Wednesday night Henry takes me anywhere I want to go —usually to the theater—and every Saturday night he goes to a bowling alley over on 125th Street and bowls with a couple of men he knows. Henry is crazy about bowling, and I think it's good exercise for him, being shut up in an office all week the way he is. So after dinner he kissed me good-by, the same as he always did, and went off to meet his friends.

But if I'd known how he was coming home that night, I never would have let him go.

CHAPTER II

IT was a warm night; so after we'd washed the dishes, Ma and I went into our bedroom, Henry's and mine, to sit, it having three windows and being the coolest room in the flat. I could see Ma didn't approve of Henry's going out, but I thought I wouldn't say anything about it, for if I started explaining it would give Ma an opportunity to find fault with Henry. So I read the evening paper and a magazine while Ma knitted away on some bedroom slippers she was making for Henry. Ma's awful good at knitting; she knows more different stitches than anybody in Centerville.

Now and then I'd stop my reading to

glance at Ma, and my! but she looked grim. You can say what you please, but there are such things as thought waves. Ma was sending them out against Henry enough to drown him, and I knew it just as well as if I'd seen them. When Ma gets it into her head that you're doing wrong, she just naturally clouds up like a thunder storm, and by-and-by she rains.

That night the storm held off till about ten o'clock, when Ma started it by glancing at the clock on the bureau and asking if it wasn't time Henry was home

I shook my head.

"Where's he gone?" asked Ma.

"He's out with his friends," I said.

"What did you say, Blanche?"

"He's out with his friends," I repeated, raising my voice.

You see, I wasn't used to Ma being so deaf, and half the time I'd forget and use my natural voice. Ma didn't like

that, maintaining as she did that she wasn't really deaf, only a little hard of hearing, and if people would speak distinctly instead of mumbling their words, she could hear as good as anybody. To prove it she would tell how she could always catch everything Letitia Barlow said, Letitia being her cousin's husband's sister. But Letitia had one of those carrying voices, it being a trait of the Barlows, her brother having the same.

Of course, Ma wanted to know what Henry's friends were, and what he was doing with them, and I told her that one of them was a paying teller in a bank and the other was a shipping clerk in a wholesale leather house, and that they were probably talking politics, not thinking it necessary to explain that they were bowling, knowing mighty well Ma wouldn't approve of bowling. But Ma didn't approve of anything that night.

"It ain't right," she said. "I never let your Pa go out at night like that."

"I'll just not argue with Ma," I thought, so I didn't say anything. But you've got to argue with Ma when she wants to argue.

"Blanche!" said she.

"Yes, Ma."

"When your Pa went out at night I always went with him."

"Poor Pa!" I said.

"What did you say, Blanche?"

"I said I know you did, Ma."

"Henry hadn't ought to go out nights and leave you alone like this."

"I ain't alone, Ma; you're here. Don't you want to look at the evening paper?"

"No," said Ma, "I don't want to look at the newspaper, and I will be heard. Henry hadn't ought to go out at night alone; it's no way to do."

"But it's Saturday night, Ma," I said; "that's Henry's night out."

And then Ma began. Pa had never had a night out, so why should Henry? It wasn't safe for married men to go gallivanting around alone nights; it gave them wrong ideas. What if Henry did work hard all week? Hadn't Pa worked hard, too? Hard work was good for men; it kept them from getting too skittish. Besides, New York wasn't like Centerville. New York was a wicked city, full of temptations. "And you needn't tell me times has changed," said Ma; "men are just the same as they always was."

"Yes, Ma," I said, "but women ain't."

"What did you say?"

"I said Henry has a perfect right to go out Saturday nights if I let him."

"You shouldn't let him," said Ma.

"Your Pa wouldn't have dared ask for a night out."

"Poor Pa!" I said.

"What's that about your Pa?"

"Nothing, Ma. I said Henry didn't ask for a night out; I gave it to him."

"Well, it ain't right," declared Ma. "If Henry loved you the way he ought to, he wouldn't want to leave you."

Of course, I told Ma she was wrong and that Henry loved me all the better for leaving me once in a while. And then I tried to steer the conversation away from New York, and around back again to Centerville. But Ma wouldn't have it.

"Blanche!" said she.

"What, Ma?"

"Is Henry a drinking man?"

"Good gracious, no!" I said, not thinking it necessary to mention that though he never drinks any other time,

Henry likes his beer Saturday nights, bowling being hot work.

"Well," said Ma, "he'll grow to be one, you mark my words. And when he does, you'll remember what I told you. Your Pa never touched a drop in his life, I'm glad to say. What are you smiling at, Blanche?"

What I was smiling at was the memory of Pa once at the County Fair when he had what Ma thought was a dizzy spell. It was the time one of our hogs won a first prize, and Pa couldn't have been blamed for celebrating. But of course I couldn't tell Ma this, so I said I was just smiling at nothing at all in particular.

Ma looked at me kind of suspicious over her spectacles, and then went on: "If Henry belonged to me, I'd make him stay at home. What was good enough for me and your Pa ought to be good

enough for you. I guess I'll have to speak to Henry."

"Don't you do it, Ma," I said. "You leave Henry alone."

"But some one had ought to speak to him," insisted Ma.

"Now see here, Ma," I said. "Henry's my man, and I understand him. For the love of Mike, don't go butting in!"

Ma looked puzzled. "What's that about Henry's buttons?" she asked.

"Nothing, Ma; I said you can talk to me as much as you like, but you've got to leave Henry alone."

"But it ain't right," said Ma.

"I can't help it," I said. "You've got to leave Henry alone. I'm sure you never took any interference from your mother-in-law."

"But I ain't your mother-in-law."

"You're Henry's, and if you want him

to love you, you've just naturally got to let him alone."

Ma didn't like that. "Ain't I good to Henry?" she asked. "Ain't I knitting these bedroom slippers for him this very minute?"

"Yes, Ma."

"Then I'd like to know what you mean."

"I mean what I say, Ma. I won't have you picking on Henry. He's a good man, and he's my man, and I won't let anybody pick on him."

With that, I got up out of my chair and said I guessed it was bedtime, and Ma said she guessed so, too, but she'd sit where she was for a spell while I was undressing, as it was more sociable. And then she put away her knitting, and started to read the evening paper, while I got out Henry's pyjamas and laid them on his bed, took off my waist, slipped on

a dressing jacket, and began taking down my hair.

"Thank goodness that's over!" I thought. "Ma just had to have her say, and now she's had it she feels better, and there's no harm done. I don't believe she'll say a word to Henry."

So I took down my hair, commenced combing out my switch, and was just beginning to feel real peaceful, when Ma looked up from her newspaper and said: "I see those Rockabilts are getting a divorce. The paper says he's a drinking man like Henry."

That made me mad. "Look here, Ma," I said, "I told you Henry wasn't a drinking man."

"Well, maybe he ain't," said Ma, "but he smokes cigarettes. Your Pa used to smoke when we was first married, but I broke him of it in two weeks. He was

mighty uncomfortable at first till he found out that chewing cloves would cure his hankering for tobacco. After that he never smoked at all, just chewed cloves. I guess I'll recommend cloves to Henry."

That made me smile, knowing as I did how Pa used to escape to the barn and smoke a pipe he kept hidden there. But of course I didn't let on. "All right, Ma," I said, "you can tell Henry that if you want to."

"Here's a man," said Ma, "that was completely cured of his rheumatism in three days by using Warner's Rheumatism Remedy. I guess I'll have to try a bottle of that. Goodness, Blanche, if you ain't wearing a switch! Did you ever put kerosene on your head? You remember Martha Winters that used to live across the street from us in Center-

ville? She was perfectly bald on top till she used kerosene on her head, and then her hair grew out like anything."

Of course, I ain't bald, having plenty of hair of my own except for the new styles, which I told Ma.

"It only seems yesterday that I used to curl your hair around a piece of broomhandle," said Ma. "My, how time does fly!"

"Yes," I said, laying down my switch and taking up my hair-brush, "it does, and that's a fact." Then, as Ma didn't say anything, I began brushing my hair and thinking about when I was a kid, and how Charley Sprague used to be sweet on me, and give me candy, and hang around after school to walk home with me. Charley always said he'd never marry anybody but me, and here he was married twice with a good chance of burying his second wife, she being sick

with typhoid fever from drinking water out of a well with microbes in it.

I was thinking how queer things turned out, and how little you know what's waiting for you just around the corner, when all of a sudden I heard a kind of sob, and, looking around, I saw Ma had her spectacles off and was wiping her eyes.

"Why, what's the matter, Ma?" I asked.

"I'm lonely, Blanche; I miss your Pa."

"There, there," I said, going over and putting my arms around her, "don't you cry."

"I ain't crying," said Ma, putting on her spectacles and blowing her nose. "Only it came over me all of a sudden-like. It's a hard world, Blanche. I ain't resigned like the minister told me to be, and praying don't do any good. I'm just waiting to be took. It's mortal

hard just sitting around waiting to be took."

"You mustn't talk like that, Ma," I said. "Henry and I will always love you."

"I know," said Ma, "but that's different. Pa's gone."

"He's waiting for you, Ma."

"Yes, I know he is. That's the trouble. He's up there waiting for me, and I'm here and I can't go to him. Do you think he misses me, Blanche?"

"I'm sure he does, Ma."

"It ain't according to the Bible, but I hope he misses me."

"You want him to be happy," I said.

"Yes," said Ma, "but not without me. I suppose it's wicked to feel like that, but I can't help it."

"I don't care whether it's wicked or not," I said. "I'd feel just the same way if Henry was took, and so would

any woman that loved her husband. What gets me, Ma, is what happens to people like Charley Sprague who marry again. It must be mighty embarrassing to meet your first up there and have to explain to her that you're waiting for your second; or maybe meet them both up there at the same time. I guess that would be a sight worse."

"Maybe one of them wouldn't go to Heaven," said Ma. "Anyway, it's a comfort to me to know your Pa's in Heaven, and not in the other place, Blanche!"

"Yes, Ma."

"I won't say a word to Henry. I guess all mother-in-laws are the same, but I'll leave you paddle your own canoe, even if I do think you're paddling it wrong."

"Thank you, Ma."

"But don't you think I approve of

Henry's going out alone nights, for I don't."

With that, Ma went off to bed, and I turned the gas low in the hall, and then I went to bed, too, for Henry doesn't like me to sit up for him. But, somehow, instead of going to sleep right away like I generally do, I got to thinking over what Ma had said, and wondering if, after all, the old-fashioned way wasn't best. Supposing Henry was to get into temptation, going out alone Saturday night the way he did? Women are like that; you sow a doubt in their minds, and if they ain't careful, the first thing they know it's growing like the grain of mustard seed in the Bible.

Maybe Henry didn't bowl every Saturday night; maybe his friends were wicked and were leading him astray. Of course, I knew this wasn't true. But there was Pa, as good a man as ever

Suppose Henry was to get into temptation going out alone Saturday night

lived; and yet he used to deceive Ma in little things right along. That's one reason I'd been so liberal with Henry. I began to wonder what I'd do if Henry did drink too much some Saturday night, and come home like that, and I guess I'd have ended by being perfectly miserable if what little common sense I possess hadn't come to the front just then. "Blanche Hawkins," I said to myself, "you're a fool! Henry's the best man in the world, and you know it. Now you go to sleep!" And I did.

I don't believe I'd been asleep ten minutes when I woke all of a sudden with the idea that the flat was on fire. No, it was the front door-bell ringing. What did that mean?

Of course, after I'd collected my wits, I knew exactly what it meant; Henry had gone off without his keys again. That's one thing about Henry, he's the

forgetfulest man I ever knew. So I got out of bed, went out into the hall and pushed the button that opens the front door downstairs; and when I'd heard that door slam, I unfastened the hall door of our flat and then went back to bed. And pretty soon I heard the hall door close, and then I pretended to be asleep; for it worries Henry when he forgets his keys and has to wake me up to let him in, so I always tell him it doesn't disturb me at all, and that I always go right to sleep the minute I get back in bed.

But that night Henry didn't seem to know what he was doing. He closed the bedroom door all right, and then I heard him drop his shoes. Henry always takes off his shoes in the hall when he lets himself in, but I didn't see the use of his taking them off after waking me up to let him in. It seemed mighty queer, but

I didn't say anything till he ran into a chair.

The room was dark, of course, but the chairs were in their usual places, and he'd never run into one before. So I sat up in bed, just to let him see I was awake, and said: "Is that you, Henry?" And then I nearly died, for though his answer was all right, his voice sounded thick and strange, and I knew perfectly well he'd had too much to drink.

It had happened just the way Ma said it would. I turned cold all over, and then I got mad clear through.

CHAPTER III

WHEN I was a kid back in Centerville I had a school-teacher named Miss Gibbs, and one thing she taught me I've never forgotten, which was not to speak to anybody when I was mad till I'd counted ten, and counted it slow. For though I was easy-going as a rule, when I did get r'iled I flared up like the forge in Jonas Miller's blacksmith shop; and I do to this day. But that night I was so mad I didn't stop at ten; I counted twenty. And then I counted ten more.

By that time I'd got control of myself, and was beginning to hope I was doing Henry an injustice. "Maybe his voice

is funny like that because he's caught cold," I thought. "I'll just speak to him again and make sure." So I asked him if he'd forgotten his keys.

But when he answered me I knew it wasn't a cold but too much drink that ailed him; for he told me he hadn't forgotten his keys, that the reason he'd rung the bell downstairs was that the keyhole acted queer.

"What was the matter with it?" I asked.

"Don't know," he said. "Keyhole wouldn't stand still—kept jumping about like a rabbit. Funny thing! Very funny!"

"It isn't funny at all," I said. "It's disgraceful!"

"Quite right, m'dear," said Henry. "Keyholes shouldn't jump about like that. Disgraceful!"

"It's you who are disgraceful," I said.

But I wasn't mad any more; I was just unhappy, and wanted to cry. There was no good crying, though; all I could do was to make the best of it, and hide it from Ma. Besides, I knew Henry would feel meaner than dog pie when he realized how he'd behaved, and I didn't believe he'd ever come home like that again. I'd see to it that he didn't.

"You go to bed," I said. "I'd light the light, only I don't want to lay eyes on you."

"Don't want a light," said Henry. "Light hurts my eyes. See better in the dark." And with that he bumped into the table.

I could just make him out in the dim light. No, I should say I didn't want to see him the way I would with the gas lighted! Just for a minute I felt as if I never wanted to see him again as long as I lived. I suppose there's lots of

women who have felt like that about their husbands, but I'd never felt that way about Henry before, and I'm glad to say I've never felt like that since; though if I had I guess I'd have got over it. That's one thing about women; as a rule, they're mighty good at getting over things—they have to be.

But to return to Henry. When he bumped into the table he said a real wicked word, and when I told him to stop talking like that and go to bed, he said he would, only what he did was to come over to the foot of my bed, instead. And when I pointed out his mistake, he didn't seem to understand, but just kept standing there.

"What we doing with two beds?" he asked.

"They're the new twin beds," I answered.

"Twins?" said Henry. "We got

twins? Never told me we had twins. Wha's their names?"

"Twin beds, you gump!"

"Don't get mad," said Henry. " 'Tain't your fault, m'dear. Everything's twins to-night. Twin doors downstairs, twin lights in the hall. Came home in a taxicab driven by two men. Funny! Very funny!"

"It isn't funny, it's dreadful! You ought to be ashamed. Go to bed!" And finally Henry did find his bed, and sat down on it; but he insisted on talking, and wouldn't go to sleep. "Want to tell you a story," he said. "Very funny! Rose told it to me to-night."

Rose? My heart seemed to stop beating.

"Where did you go to-night, Henry?" I asked in a voice that scared me, it sounded so strange.

"Been to lodge."

"But, Henry, you don't belong to any lodge."

"Tha's right, m'dear. You know that Elk button I wear sometimes?"

"What are you talking about?"

"That little Elk button. I ain't an Elk, I'm a Bull Moose."

"Who is Rose, Henry?"

"Friend of mine. Little Jack Rose—used to be jockey."

"Oh!" I said.

I'd never been jealous before in my whole life, and I never want to be again; for from the moment Henry said he'd been out with Rose till I found out who Rose was, I felt exactly like some one had taken my soul and dropped it in boiling hot lard like they would a doughnut. It was like getting back to Heaven after spending a few days in the other place to find out Rose was a man. And after that I didn't care much if Henry

had taken too much to drink. "He won't do it again," I thought, "and even if he does, there's lots worse things." So I said good-night to him real gentle, and told him he'd better go to sleep.

But Henry wasn't through talking. "Ain't in bed yet," he said. "Want to tell you about that Elk button. Bought it in a pawnshop. Only wear it Saturday nights."

"What are you talking about?" I said.

"Nothing," said Henry. "Forgot. Shouldn't talk about it. Secret."

"Well, it won't be a secret to-morrow," I replied. "To-morrow you're going to tell me everything. You'll be sorry to-morrow, Henry."

"Tha's right, m'dear. Always sorry to-morrow. Always happy to-night. Good-night!"

"Good-night," I said.

I don't know how long I stayed awake

after that; maybe ten minutes, maybe half an hour. It seemed at first as if I couldn't go to sleep at all, having so much to think about that was new and unpleasant. But after a while it came over me how foolish it was to lie awake and brood over things. Besides, it wasn't fair to Henry.

"It's not for you to harbor resentment against Henry," I thought. "What you've got to do is to lead him back to the path of righteousness, and if you lie awake all night you'll be cross to-morrow, and then instead of leading him, you'll try to drive him, which will be bad for you both." So I just put everything out of mind, except how good Henry had always been to me in the past, and with that came faith in the future—and sleep.

It's funny how you wake up sometimes all of a sudden with the feeling that

there's a burglar in the house, or you've forgotten to wind the clock, or you've left the water running in the bathroom, only to find on investigating that you've probably dreamed it. Henry told me afterward that he hadn't made a sound, but just the same the first thing I knew I was awake again, and sitting up in bed, listening. And there was some one in the room, too, for as soon as my eyes got used to the darkness I made out a dim shadow over by the door.

"Is that you, Henry?" I said.

"Yes, dear," he answered.

"What are you doing out of bed?" I asked him.

"Did I wake you? I'm sorry."

"Never mind," I said. "Are you all right now?"

"As right as rain," he replied; and to tell the truth, his voice did sound different.

"That's good," I said. "Now get back to bed. The bed's over here."

"Yes, I know. Sorry I woke you up. Go to sleep, dear."

"I'm glad you woke me up. I see you're all right now."

"Yes, I'm all right. Good-night."

"Good-night."

I lay back in bed quite contented. Henry couldn't have had very much to drink or else he wouldn't have recovered so quick. Maybe, too, there'd been something wrong with what he'd had.

"That jockey probably put something in his glass to make him like that," I thought. "What with gambling and horse-racing, jockeys are apt to be like that. To-morrow I'll make Henry promise not to have anything more to do with Jack Rose."

In the meantime, Henry didn't seem to have any trouble finding his bed, which

was also encouraging. He didn't say anything about there being two beds, either, or run into the table.

"That's fine!" I thought. "Henry's himself again!"

Have you ever bolstered up your pride, and said everything's all right, only to find out the next minute what a fool you've been? Well, that's exactly what happened to me; for just as I was congratulating myself on Henry's rapid recovery, I heard him kind of gasp.

"What's the matter now?" I said, sitting up.

"Matter?" cried Henry. "Matter? Jumping Jehosephat! Everything's the matter! There's some one in my bed!"

"Oh, dear!" I said. "And I thought you were all right!"

"I tell you there's some one in my bed!"

That worried me. "Do you see any-

thing else?" I asked—"pink lizards, or green elephants, or purple snakes?"

"What are you talking about?" Henry asked.

"Then you don't see them?"

"I don't see anything," said Henry, "but I'm going to as soon as I can find a match."

"Don't you begin playing with matches now," I said, "or you'll set the flat on fire. You go to bed and stop trapesing around in the dark."

"But I tell you there's some one in my bed!"

"I know there is," I said, thinking to humor him. "I put the twins in your bed, but if they disturb you I'll take them in with me."

"Twins?" said Henry. "Twins?"

"Yes," I said. "Now do be sensible and go to bed."

But Henry didn't go to bed. Instead,

he sort of groaned, and kept on hunting for matches.

"Are you going back to bed by yourself, or must I get up and put you to bed?" I asked.

"I'm going, dearest," he answered. And then he struck a match and lighted the gas.

The light sort of blinded me at first; then, things clearing up, I saw Henry standing in the center of the room, looking at me real anxious and troubled.

"Why, Henry," I said, "you're all dressed! I thought—" And then, my eyes shifting over to Henry's bed, I let out a yell like a wild Indian. For there was some one in Henry's bed! A man!

"Look!" I cried, pointing to the bed.

"I'm looking," said Henry. "What does this mean?"

"I—I don't know," I said. And then I began to cry.

"I—I don't know," I said, and then I began to cry

CHAPTER IV

ONE thing's sure; men—at least some men—are more reasonable than any woman that ever lived. Now I'm a reasonable woman, as women go. But when I think how Henry acted that night, and how I'd have acted, if I'd come home like he did and found— Well, it just makes me sorry women are like that, though I suppose they wouldn't be women if they weren't.

I wouldn't have blamed Henry if he'd gone off his head and said things when he found that man in his bed. No, I wouldn't have blamed him a bit—and I wouldn't have forgiven him.

But Henry was different; what he did was to come over and put his arms

around me, and try to comfort me. "Don't you cry, dear," he said. "It's all right."

"It—isn't—all—right," I sobbed. "You—you don't think I knew he was there?"

"Of course not," he said.

At that I cried harder than ever. "Henry," I said, "you're—you're the sweetest man in the world."

"Nonsense!" said Henry. "But how did he get here?"

"I—I don't know," I replied. "The door-bell rang, and I—I thought it was you, and—and I went out and pressed the button, and opened the hall door. And then—and then I went back to bed. And then— Oh, you'll never forgive me! But when you came in it was dark, and you talked queer, and I thought—I thought you'd had too much to drink. Oh, it's too terrible!"

"You poor darling!" said Henry, very softly.

All this while the man in Henry's bed had been sleeping peacefully, thank goodness! or I don't know what I'd have done. Anyway, I felt a lot better after I'd twisted up my hair, and hid in the closet. It was comforting, too, to learn that our guest hadn't undressed except for his coat and shoes, for naturally I wanted to see what was going on. And I did, peering out from behind the closet door.

What went on first was that Henry leaned over and shook the stranger within his bed, which didn't do any good at all.

"You wake up!" said Henry, giving him another shake.

"Lemme alone!" murmured the stranger.

Henry gave him another shake, and

this time he sat up. "Wha's matter?" he asked. "Is it morning?"

"No," said Henry, "it isn't morning. Who are you, anyway?"

"Name's Deane. What are you doing in my flat?"

"This isn't your flat; it's mine," Henry said sharply.

" 'Tisn't, either; s'mine."

"Where do you live?"

"124 East 123rd Street."

"No, you don't. I know everybody who lives in this house."

"All right," said the stranger, and with that he lay down again.

"Here, you sit up!" said Henry, giving him another shake. "Where do you live?"

"123 East 124th Street."

"That's more like it. Did you hear that, Blanche? He lives at 123 East 124th Street."

"124 East 123rd Street," said the stranger.

"No," said Henry, "123 East 124th Street."

"Tha's what I said," declared the stranger.

"How long have you lived at 123 East 124th Street?"

"Moved in yesterday. Fine flat! No gas—'lectric lights. Fifty dollars a month! Wha's matter?"

"Nothing, only you've got in the wrong flat."

"Never mind," said the stranger. "Sleepy now. Good-night."

"Here, none of that!" said Henry. "You're not going to sleep now. Have you got a wife?"

"Yes, got a wife. Just had twins. She told me about it to-night. Great surprise! Ought to go home and see 'em."

"I think I know what he's talking about, Henry," I whispered. "He's talking about—"

"Yes," interrupted the stranger, "tha's my name. Henry—Henry Deane. Wife's got twins. Never knew about it." And with that the poor man began to cry.

"Here, you stop crying!" said Henry.

"Can't," said Mr. Deane. "Wife's got twins, little boy and little girl. Ought to go home."

"What's all this about twins, anyway?" asked Henry, coming over to the clothes-closet where I was hiding.

"It's like this," I said. "When he came in the dark, I said 'Is that you, Henry?' and he said 'Yes,' and then he came over to the foot of my bed, and I said, 'Your bed's over there.' And then he asked me what was the matter with the beds, and I told him they were the

new twin beds, so that's where he must have got the idea."

"I see," said Henry. "Drat it all, he's gone to sleep again!"

"If that's the case," I said, "I'm coming out of the closet." And I did.

"But what shall we do with him?" asked Henry.

"I don't know," I answered. "We can't turn him loose the way he is, and we certainly can't take him home like that."

"Your Ma has the only other bed in the flat," said Henry. "Tell you what; we might make up a bed for him on the lounge in the dining-room."

"I don't like the idea of a perfect stranger sleeping in the dining-room," I said. "We don't know a thing about him."

"Then perhaps we'd better let him stay where he is."

"But what will I do?" I asked.

"You might go and tuck in with your ma."

"Not me," I said. "If I was to tuck in with Ma, she'd think we'd quarreled, sure."

"Then I don't see anything but to put him to bed in the dining-room."

"No," I said, "if he sleeps in the dining-room, Ma will be sure to get up early and find him there, and then there would be all sorts of explanations. I guess I'd better sleep in the dining-room myself."

"Yes, I guess you had," agreed Henry.

"I don't like his sleeping in here with you, though. He might get up in the night and murder you."

"Nonsense!" said Henry. "He's dead to the world. The thing to do is to get him out of the flat good and early before Ma's awake. Then you can come

in here, and there won't be any explanations to make."

"Yes," I said, "I believe that is the best plan. I wonder if he really does live at 123 East 124th Street. You might look in his coat-pockets, and see if he's got a card."

Henry thought that was a good idea, so he looked through Mr. Deane's coat-pockets and discovered a green leather wallet containing some banknotes, and papers, and some business cards, which informed us that Mr. Deane represented the Gibraltar Life Insurance Company. And looking further, he found another card with "123 East 124th Street" scribbled on it.

"He's wearing an Elk button on his coat, too," said Henry, "so he must be all right."

"Yes," I said, not thinking it necessary to repeat what Mr. Deane had told

me about that Elk button, "I guess he's a respectable citizen except on Saturday nights."

With that Henry returned the wallet to the inside pocket of Mr. Deane's coat, and flung the coat across a chair by the bed, which was a natural thing for him to do; though if I'd known what trouble that simple action was going to cause, I'd never have let him do it. But how was I to know?

"Well," said Henry, "it's all hours of the night, and I guess we'd better make up that bed in the dining-room. If we don't, we'll never go to sleep."

"No," I said, "we can't go to sleep yet."

"Why not?"

"Because we can't," I said. "Do you know who I'm thinking of, Henry?"

"No," said Henry, kind of cross, "I

don't. If you're not going to bed, what are you going to do?"

"I've been thinking about that man's poor wife," I said, pointing to the bed where Mr. Deane was sleeping peaceful as a lamb. "I suppose she's sitting up, wondering what's become of him."

"Better to let her sit up and wonder than to see him the way he is," said Henry. "If you think I'm going to take him home like that, you're mistaken."

"I don't want you to take him home," I said. "But I can't bear to think of his poor wife waiting up for him, and watching the clock, and wondering if he hasn't been run over by a taxicab, or murdered, or been took sick and gone to a hospital."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" asked Henry.

"It's you who's going to do it," I

answered. "What you've got to do, Henry, is to send her a telegram."

Henry agreed that it would be a kindness to send a telegram, but wanted to know how in blazes he was going to do it. "I can't leave you here alone with that man," he said.

"Oh, pshaw!" I said. "That man wouldn't harm a kitten. Besides, it won't take you more than five or six minutes to run over to 125th Street and send a telegram. What puzzles me is what to put in the message."

"But I won't leave you alone!"

"Yes, you will, too," I said. "We've just got to send that poor woman a telegram."

"But what would you do if he woke up while I was gone and got gay?"

"I'd jab him with this," I said, going out into the hall and returning with my umbrella.

"A hatpin would be better," said Henry.

"All right, I'll get a hatpin, too. Honestly, Henry, we've just got to send that poor woman a telegram. I know how I'd feel if you didn't come home; I'd think something awful had happened to you, and I'd cry my eyes out, and wouldn't sleep a wink."

"Bless your heart," said Henry, "I believe you would."

"And that's why we have to send a telegram to Mrs. Henry Deane. Goodness! Supposing his name hadn't been Henry, and when I said, 'Is that you, Henry?' he'd answered, 'No, it's Bob.' "

"On the whole," said Henry, "if it had to be—and I guess it did or it wouldn't have happened—it's lucky it turned out the way it did. Are you sure it won't scare you to be left alone with him?"

"Scare me? Of course it will scare me!"

"You might lock him in here, and wait for me out in the hall."

"Not much!" I said. "He might set the flat on fire if he was locked in here all alone by himself. I can manage; don't you worry. Besides, I don't believe he'll wake for twenty-four hours unless you stick pins in him. He's dead to the world."

"All right, dear," said Henry, "I'll do as you say. Only, what shall we put in the telegram?"

"Let's get a pencil and paper and kind of figure it out," I said.

After writing all sorts of messages, we decided on this as being the safest:

Mrs. Henry Deane,
123 E. 124th St., N. Y. City.

Stopping all night with friends. Be home to-morrow morning. Love. HENRY.

My Henry thought it a first-rate telegram, and so did I. For see the artfulness of it; only a sober man would stop to count his words, and a ten-word message would convince his wife that her Henry was safe and sober, even if he wasn't truthful. She probably would doubt his word, but that was his affair. Neither Henry nor I could see how we could very well do more than we were doing.

So Henry put on his hat, lighted the gas in the hall, and I went with him to the door. And then I came back to the bedroom, and with a hatpin in one hand and my umbrella clutched tight in the other, sat down in a rocking chair to wait.

I never was a good hand at waiting, and the longer I waited the more fidgety I got. I began to wonder if I'd have the courage to jab our guest with my umbrella if he woke up and acted queer, and

to wish I hadn't been so rash sending Henry off with that telegram. It was all right to be sorry for poor Mrs. Deane crying her eyes out, but here I was left alone with a perfect stranger who might wake up any minute and try to brain me.

Finally I couldn't stand it any longer. Thinks I: "I've got to do something, or I'll just naturally bust. I guess I'll get out the bedclothes, and make up the lounge in the dining-room." So I went into the closet and took down two sheets and a blanket from a shelf, at the same time being mighty careful to keep my umbrella; I had the hatpin handy, too—stuck through my hair.

Coming out the closet with my arms full of bedclothes and the umbrella dangling from my wrist, I went over to my bed to get one of my pillows. And then —Well, I'll never forget what happened

next as long as I live! For just as I was leaning over to get that pillow, who should come marching into the room but Ma!

CHAPTER V

OF course, if I'd stopped to think, I never would have acted as I did. But I didn't expect Ma, and her coming in like that, and Henry gone, and a strange man in his bed knocked what little sense I had out of my head.

The worst of it was, Ma didn't say anything at first; just stood and stared at me. And I stared back, my legs weak at the knees, and my heart beating like a drum. It was awful!

Finally Ma found her tongue. "What are you doing with that umbrella?" she asked.

"I—I don't know," I faltered. "I—I thought it looked like rain."

"What's that?"

"I was putting it away, Ma," I said. "What are you doing trapesing around in your nightgown this time of night?"

"I woke up and saw a streak of light under my door, so I thought I'd investigate; and I'm glad I did. Blanche, this is disgraceful."

"I know it is, Ma," I said, "but I can't help it." And then I began to cry.

"There, there!" said Ma. "You're all unstrung, ain't you? Don't you cry, girlie! You just come and tuck into my bed with me. Henry ought to be ashamed of himself!"

"You mustn't blame Henry," I said, "it isn't his fault. Besides, we've known Mr. Deane for years, and he's just like a brother to me."

"What are you talking about, Blanche? Who's Mr. Deane?"

"He—he's a friend of Henry's," I faltered.

"He's a poor friend of Henry's, then," said Ma, "or this wouldn't have happened."

"You—you don't understand," I sobbed.

"I do, too," said Ma. "Henry's come home—"

"Henry?" I gasped.

"Yes, Henry," said Ma. "Who do you suppose I'm talking about?"

I looked at Ma to see if she was really serious, and then glanced at Henry's bed. As a matter of fact, only the top of the stranger's head was showing, and it was kind of bald like Henry's. "Thank goodness!" I thought. "I won't have to explain after all."

For you see, it isn't so easy to explain things to Ma, her being deaf; besides, a strange man in your husband's bed needs an awful lot of explaining. So, acting on impulse, I decided to let Ma think the

stranger was Henry if she wanted to, and I said: "You go to bed, Ma. If we stand here talking we'll wake Henry, and he's tired out."

"Oh!" said Ma. "He's tired out, is he?"

"Yes, Henry's dead tired," I replied. "If he wasn't, we'd have woke him up long ago."

"But I can't go to bed and leave you like this," said Ma. "What you doing with those bedclothes?"

Though I hadn't realized it, all this time I'd been hanging on to the two sheets and blanket I'd got out to make up the lounge in the dining-room. Not knowing what else to say (Ain't it awful how one lie leads to another?), I told Ma I'd got out the extra covers because I was having a chill. "But I'm feeling better now," I said, "a lot better." (Which wasn't true, either, for now I was in a

panic for fear the stranger would turn over in his sleep and show his face.) "Do go to bed, Ma."

"Do you know what I believe?" said Ma. "I believe you're afraid of Henry, and you've got that umbrella, and that hatpin stuck in your hair to protect yourself with."

"Afraid of Henry?" I cried. "Ma, you're crazy! Why should I be afraid of Henry?"

"You can't fool me, Blanche; I know what ails Henry."

"He's tired out."

"Tired out, your grandmother's cat! Haven't I got eyes and a nose? Henry's the worse for drink, that's what ails him!"

And now, too late, I saw what I had done. By letting Ma think the stranger was Henry, I'd convicted Henry, in Ma's

eyes, at least, of having come home the worse for drink. It was too dreadful! And yet it seemed almost as bad to tell Ma I'd been lying to her, as to let her think ill of Henry. So I said: "Ma, you're wrong about Henry, and to-morrow you'll be sorry for having thought ill of him."

"I don't believe it," said Ma. "If Henry's all right like you say he is, just wake him up and let him prove it."

"I won't, either."

"Then I will," said Ma, starting towards the bed.

"No, you won't," I said. "You leave Henry alone!" And then I had an awful thought: supposing Henry was to come walking in, as he might any minute. What would Ma think then?

"Ma," I said, going over to her and taking her by the arm, "I forgot to bolt

the front door. If I go and bolt it will you promise to leave Henry alone till I get back?"

"No," said Ma, "I won't."

"Then you've got to go with me," I said, tucking her arm in mine.

"Are you crazy, Blanche?"

"Mighty near it."

"What's that?"

"I said I wasn't crazy, Ma, but I'm afraid to go out in the hall alone, and you've got to come with me."

"You didn't used to be like that," said Ma. "I remember when you wasn't scared of anything. Henry must have terrorized you a heap to make you like that."

"I was always like that," I said; "Henry had nothing to do with it. Come along." And with that I half-dragged Ma to the front door, which I bolted.

"Now, Ma," I said, "you go back to bed."

"Not likely," said Ma, "with you having a chill."

Of course I told Ma I was through having chills, and that the best place for me was in bed. Ma agreed with me there, only she insisted on my tucking in with her. And when I said I wouldn't, she declared it was either that, or else she'd tuck in with me.

"But you can't, Ma," I said. "I only got a single bed. Besides, it wouldn't be proper."

"I don't care whether it's proper or not," said Ma. "If you think I'm going to leave a child of mine alone with a man who's had too much drink, you're mistaken."

You can imagine what a state I was in with Ma acting like that, and me expecting Henry back any minute. I just

didn't know what to do. If I did tuck in with Ma, Henry, finding the front door bolted when he came back, would probably think Mr. Deane had murdered me; if I didn't tuck in with Ma, there was no telling what mightn't happen. On the whole, I decided it was better to risk scaring Henry than to take any more chances with Ma.

Yet I hated to scare Henry. Why couldn't I write him a note, explaining how things were, and slip it under the front door?

It wouldn't be very cheerful for Henry, waiting out there, but it would be better than thinking I'd been murdered. Besides, if Ma went right to sleep, which I hoped she would, I'd be able to steal out and let him in almost as soon as he arrived. Anyway, that's what I decided to do, and finally, after promising to join her in five minutes, I got Ma to go back

to bed. Then I dashed into my room and scribbled a note to Henry.

After I'd done that, and satisfied myself Mr. Deane was still asleep, I turned out the gas, and went out into the hall where I got down on my knees and pushed the note I'd written under the front door with a hairpin, there being plenty of space, the building being old and kind of out of plumb, so to speak.

I guess I took longer than five minutes to do it, though, for Ma came out of her room and discovered me just as I got the note under the door. And seeing me on my knees, she naturally thought I was praying, and that I'd chosen a funny place to do it. "If you want to pray for Henry," she said—"and I guess he needs it if anyone does—come into my room, and I'll pray with you."

I laughed at that, I couldn't help it.

"That's right," said Ma. "You're

laughing now, and praying did it. Shall I turn out the gas, Blanche?"

"No," I said, "leave it burn."

But Ma thought that was wasteful extravagance. So she compromised by turning it low, after which I followed her into her room; and before long we were both in bed, the door into the hall closed, the room dark, and me praying a real prayer, which was that Ma would go to sleep soon so that I could slip out and let poor Henry in. For the more I thought about his staying out there on the landing, the less I liked it.

Supposing the people in the flat above us were to come home and find him sitting out there? They'd think it mighty queer. It wasn't likely they'd be out so late at night, but I couldn't help worrying. I'm not the worrying kind, but by this time I'd got into a sort of nervous state, and no wonder.

You see, I took it for granted that Henry had already read my note, and was out there waiting for me to let him in. So you can imagine how I jumped, when all of a sudden I heard a noise out in the hall. It sounded like some one hammering on the front door, though I couldn't be sure.

"Goodness!" I thought. "I hope Mr. Deane hasn't woke up and started on the rampage!" For it seemed impossible that Henry could have failed to see the note I'd slipped under the door, and if it wasn't Henry, it must be Mr. Deane. Anyway, I'd better investigate. But when I started to slip out of bed real quiet, Ma, who wasn't asleep yet, reached over and grabbed me by the arm.

"You lie down and go to sleep," she said.

"I will in a minute, Ma. I just want to see if Henry's all right."

"If you keep jumping in and out of bed like a grasshopper, we'll neither of us get any sleep," said Ma. "You're to come back, mind!"

"Yes, Ma," I said, "I'll be right back." And with that I got out of bed and kind of felt my way over to the door.

By this time the hammering sound had stopped. But I thought I'd better investigate just the same, so I went over to our bedroom door and looked in. Though I couldn't see him, I knew Mr. Deane was asleep because he was snoring; not loud, but regular—like the ticking of a clock.

"That settles him," I thought. "It must have been some one else who made that noise. Anyway, now that I'm up, I can let Henry in. That is, I can if Ma stays in bed."

I felt in my bones that if I did open the front door and let Henry in, Ma would

choose that identical moment to pop out of her room and spoil everything. Just the same, I was going to chance it, for I couldn't bear to think of poor Henry waiting outside there. So after looking over my shoulder and straining my ears for any sound from Ma's room, I slipped the bolt and opened the front door. And then I was completely flabbergasted. Henry wasn't there! When I came to look for it, I found the note I'd written him wasn't there, either.

"That explains it," I thought. "After reading my note, Henry waited till he got tired, and now he's probably killing time by walking around the block."

It seemed probable, too, that the hammering I'd heard had been a boy with a telegram who'd come up one flight too many. For there was a bright light in the hall below, and by looking over the banisters I could see that the front door

of the flat underneath ours was open. So I closed our front door—not slipping the bolt this time—and went back to Ma's room.

I wanted to write Henry another note to tell him the door wasn't bolted now, and he could steal in and go to bed if he wanted to; but to do that I'd have to light a light in our room, which I didn't like to do with Mr. Deane asleep in there. Besides, I felt sure Ma was already beginning to wonder why I was gone so long.

I was right about Ma. She was on the point of getting out of bed to come after me, and she scolded me good for skirmishing around in my bare feet, and me just over a chill.

"You'll be sick to-morrow, as sure as guns," she said. "I never passed such a night in my life, what with Henry coming home the worse for drink, and you telling

stories about him, having chills, and tempting Providence the worst way, kneeling to pray like you did by a door with a crack under it, and you with next to nothing on and in a draught all the time you was there. Haven't you got any sense, Blanche?''

With that, Ma flopped over on her side and tried to go to sleep. If she'd only succeeded! But she didn't; and her not going to sleep caused me so much worry, later, that when I looked in the glass next morning, I almost expected to find my hair had turned white like the Count of Monte Cristo's did—or was it Henry Ward Beecher?

CHAPTER VI

AS I lay there waiting for Ma to go to sleep, I wondered and wondered what I could do to clear Henry's reputation. I couldn't bear to have Ma thinking ill of him, and misjudging him the way she was; yet I couldn't see how to convince her she was wrong. Of course Henry had a perfect alibi, but in order to establish it, I'd have to explain that it was Mr. Deane and not Henry who had had too much to drink, and that was something I couldn't very well explain now. It would sound fine to-morrow morning, wouldn't it? for me to say: "Ma, that man you saw in Henry's bed last night wasn't Henry at all, but a perfect stranger."

I could tell her this, though: that Henry had come home with a raging toothache, and before he went to sleep had been holding whisky in his mouth to ease the pain. Yes, I'd tell Ma that, and maybe Henry would think of something else to tell her; for I wasn't going to have Ma return to Centerville with the idea that Henry came home the worse for drink every Saturday night, and him the best man in the world, and the kindest.

Wasn't it Henry's kindness that was responsible for the whole business? If he'd turned Mr. Deane out into the street the way most men would instead of running off to send a telegram to his poor wife, there wouldn't have been anything to explain. And there was Mr. Deane asleep and happy, and Henry locked out of his own flat, or just as good as locked out. When all is said and done, it's no great shakes to pick up a wounded man

by the roadside and give him a lift. I'll bet if the Good Samaritan in the Bible had come home and found a strange man in his wife's twin bed, he wouldn't have acted as generous as Henry did.

And where was Henry now? Was he waiting outside the front door again, or was he still walking around the block? And would he have sense enough to try the door with his key, or would he wait for me to open the door like I told him I would in the note I wrote him?

"Are you asleep, Ma?" I asked.

Ma didn't answer, and I began wondering why she didn't answer. Was she asleep, or hadn't she heard me?

I'd spoken loud enough, so she should have heard me, only she was lying on her left side, and it's her left ear that she hears best with. So I didn't know whether she was asleep or not.

By this time I was in such a nervous

state that I was ready to scream, and I was on the point of getting out of bed again, whether Ma was asleep or not, when I heard something that made my blood run cold. It was a queer, splintering sort of noise and sounded for all the world like some one was trying to break down the front door.

I was out of bed like a shot, making for the door as fast as I could in the dark; and though Ma proved she wasn't asleep by ordering me to come back to bed, you can better believe I didn't go back. Instead, I opened the bedroom door and peered out into the hall.

Cr—rash!

There was no doubt about it, some one *was* trying to break down the front door!

Glancing over my shoulder I saw that Ma was getting out of bed. Well, I wasn't going to have her face any danger, so I slipped the key from the lock,

and, stepping out into the hall, shut the door and locked it. Ma was safe, anyway.

Cr—rash!

Maybe Mr. Deane was a criminal, and the police, having tracked him to our flat, were breaking down our front door to get at him. Grabbing my umbrella from the hat-rack where I'd hung it, I tiptoed towards the front door.

Cr—rash! And Ma pounding on her door and yelling: "Blanche, let me out!" and me scared within an inch of my life! Just the same, something had got to be done, so I called out in a shaky voice: "Who's there?" And then I heard some one outside say: "Thank God!" and I knew it was Henry.

But if Henry was thankful, you can better believe I wasn't; I was mad as a hornet. What did he mean by giving me such a fright? Marching up to the

front door, I flung it wide open. And then I nearly died! For Henry wasn't alone; there was a man with him—a fat man in pink pyjamas, who carried a stove-lifter!

The fat man stared at me, and I stared at him, till, remembering all of a sudden I hadn't anything on but my nightgown, I dashed behind the door. To make matters worse, Ma kept pounding on her door, and demanding to be let out.

"Are you hurt, dearest?" asked Henry.

"No, I ain't!" I said.

"Some one seems to be in trouble," said the fat man.

"Yes, what's the matter with your Ma?" asked Henry.

"Nothing!" I replied. "Henry, you come in here!"

"If you don't need me any more," said the fat man.

"No, we don't need you, and never did!" I snapped from behind the door.

"I'm sure I'm much obliged to you for your assistance," said Henry.

"Don't mention it," said the fat man. "Good-night." And with that he started downstairs, and Henry came in.

"Now," I said, closing the door and standing with my back against it, "will you kindly explain what you mean by trying to break down the front door, and scaring me to death?"

"Don't you suppose I was scared?" said Henry. "When I came back from sending that telegram and found the front door bolted, I thought something dreadful had happened. And then when I knocked and you didn't answer, I could only think of one explanation, and that was that Mr. Deane had murdered you."

"Murdered my aunt! Didn't my note explain?"

"What note?"

"Do you mean to tell me you didn't get the note I wrote you?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Henry.

"Then somebody else got it, or—" I opened the front door again, and then I saw what had become of the note. You see the landing carpet was loose at the door sill, and what I'd done was to push the note not only under the door, but under the carpet, as well.

"There," I said, "that explains everything!"

"But, what about your Ma?"

"She's locked in. You read the note and you'll understand. You see, Ma came into our bedroom after you'd gone."

"Good Heavens!" said Henry. "Then she saw Mr. Deane in my bed!"

"She did and she didn't. Of course

she saw him, but only the top of his head was showing, so she thought it was you, and I let her think so."

"Then it's all right," said Henry.

"It ain't, either; it's all wrong. Ma smelled whisky the minute she came into our room. And what with Mr. Deane being dead to the world, and not able to defend his character, which he couldn't have, anyway, and me being fool enough to let Ma think he was you—"

"Great Scott!" said Henry. "Then Ma thinks I'm—"

"Exactly," I said.

"But why did you lock her in her room?"

"Because, thinking Mr. Deane was you, and him the worse for drink, she insisted on my tucking in with her. And then you had to go and get a fat man to break down the front door, and see your wife with nothing on but a nightgown.

Besides, I thought it was burglars trying to get in, and I wasn't going to have Ma shot at by burglars if I could help it."

"But I had to get some one to help me," said Henry. "I couldn't break down the door alone."

"Who wanted you to break it down? And now there's Ma to explain things to. We've got to do something, or she'll holler herself sick, and wear all the skin off her knuckles."

"Yes," agreed Henry, "your Ma will wake up everybody in the block if we don't do something."

"Well, then, hurry up and think! What shall we tell her?"

"I—I don't know," said Henry, "unless we tell her the truth."

"And have her find out I'd been lying to her, and allowing a strange man to sleep in my twin bed? Not much! No, we'll tell her a burglar was trying to

break into the flat, and I locked her in to keep her from doing anything rash, knowing how brave she is. That's what we'll tell her. Hang your hat on the rack, and come along."

Ma was the maddest white woman in America when we opened her door. She glared at me like a tiger; wanted to know what I meant by locking her in, and if I thought that was any way for a daughter to treat her mother.

"I only did it to protect you, Ma," I said.

"Protect me? Protect me from what?"

"From burglars, Ma."

"What's she talking about, Henry?"

"Burglars, Ma!" I screamed. "They tried to break into the flat! If you don't believe it, come and look at the front door."

Ma was perfectly willing to look at the

front door, so we trailed down the hall, opened the door, and Henry pointed out the dents the fat man had made with his stove-lifter. But even then Ma was only half-convinced.

"I don't believe there were any burglars," she said, "and even if there were, you had no business to lock me in my room, Blanche."

"It was to save you from being shot at, Ma."

"Well, I'd rather be shot at than be locked in a room the way I was. Don't you ever let me catch you doing anything like that again."

"I won't, Ma," I promised. I hoped it wouldn't be necessary a second time.

"H'm!" said Henry. "Don't you wish to tell Ma something else, Blanche?"

"Oh, yes! I want you to take a good look at Henry, Ma. I've told him what

you thought about him, and his feelings are hurt."

"Yes, Ma," said Henry, "how could you think I'd take too much to drink?"

"Because," said Ma, "I smelled whisky for one thing."

"He'd had a toothache," I explained, "and had been holding whisky in his mouth to ease the pain. You can see for yourself he's as sober as a judge."

"I haven't got my glasses," said Ma, "but he seems sober. I'm sorry if I've done you an injustice, Henry, though I must say that holding whisky in your mouth is likely to lead you to forming a habit for strong drink, if you haven't already got the habit, which I'm sure I hope you haven't. And even if you have, it isn't much worse than Blanche's habit of locking people in their rooms."

Luckily, I understood Ma well enough to know that what she said amounted to

her admitting that she was in the wrong. So I breathed a sigh of relief. At last everything seemed to be running smoothly. Though the thought of it made me turn as pink as his pyjamas, I even forgave Henry for letting that fat man see me there at the door in my night-gown.

But nothing could go right that night. For just as I was congratulating myself that all was well, I heard a noise (it sounded like some one overturning a chair in our bedroom) that scared me worse than when Henry had tried to break into the flat. And then, before either Henry or I could do anything, or get Ma out of the hall, our bedroom door opened, and Mr. Deane appeared on the scene.

There he stood, all dressed except for his coat and shoes, thank goodness! but with one hand on his stomach. And as

he blinked at the light, he murmured, "Going to be sick. Going to be awful sick!"

CHAPTER VII

OF course it wasn't funny. Besides, Henry says I haven't any sense of humor, and maybe I haven't. But Mr. Deane appearing like that and saying what he did, sort of got me going; I began to laugh. And once I'd started laughing I couldn't stop, though you can better believe I wanted to, with Henry glaring at me the way he was. Mr. Deane looked mighty reproachful, too; and Ma stared first at me and then at Mr. Deane, her eyes as big as saucers. And me laughing like I was enjoying it when I was really half-crazy with wondering how on earth we'd ever be able to explain things to Ma now. It was awful!

"Who's that man?" demanded Ma, pointing to Mr. Deane. "And why is Blanche laughing?"

"I don't know," said Henry.

"Going to be sick," murmured Mr. Deane. "Going to be sick soon."

"He came out of your room," said Ma.

"Tell her," I managed to gasp, "tell her he's a burglar."

"You stop laughing, and tell her yourself," said Henry.

"Blanche is having hysterics," said Ma.

"Oh," said Henry, "is that what ails her?"

"Going to be sick," murmured Mr. Deane. "Going to be sick now."

"No, you're not!" said Henry, and with that he grabbed Mr. Deane by the arm and yanked him into our bedroom, slamming the door behind him.

"Well, I never!" said Ma. "Who's that man, Blanche, and what is Henry doing to him?"

But I only shook my head helplessly. I was through laughing by this time; I was crying now. I couldn't even think clear any more. It came over me suddenly that Mr. Deane was the second man who'd seen me in my nightgown that night, and so I naturally cried harder than ever.

Having had a cousin named Loretta Barnes, who used to have hysterics every time there was a thunder storm, which is kind of frequent in Indiana, Ma knew about what to do. So she began soothing me, patting me on the shoulder, and talking to me like I was a baby. "There, there," she said. "Don't you cry, dearie. It's all right. I won't let anybody hurt you."

At that my mind sort of cleared, and

I thought I saw a way to at least postpone any more explanations till to-morrow.

"Take—me—to—bed," I sobbed.

"Yes," said Ma, "that's the best place for you." And with that she led me into her room, lighted the gas, and tucked me into her bed.

"Now," I thought, "if she'll only go to bed, too, everything will be all right."

But Ma evidently had no intention of going to bed. Instead, after smoothing my pillow and patting my cheek, she started towards the door.

"Where are you going?" I screamed, sitting up in bed.

"I'm going to see if Henry needs any help."

"No, no!" I cried. "I won't be left here alone!"

"But Henry may need me. Who was that man, Blanche?"

"He was a burglar. And don't you dare leave me alone."

"But if he's a burglar, he may be murdering Henry."

"I don't care if he is," I said.

"Why, Blanche Hawkins!"

"I—I'm not myself, Ma," I whimpered. "If you leave me alone, I'll die."

"What's that you say."

"I said Henry's a match for any burglar that ever lived, and I won't be left alone."

"Then," said Ma, "I know what I'll do."

Wondering what on earth she was up to now, I watched Ma cross to the bureau, open the top drawer, and take something out—something small with a string tied to it. She was making for the window, which was open, when suddenly realizing what she was up to, I jumped out of bed, and running over to her, snatched

what she had out of her hand. It was lucky I did, too; for what Ma had got out of the bureau was a police whistle, and what she meant to do was to lean out of the window and blow it.

Of course Ma resented my snatching the police whistle away from her, and gave me fits. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" she said. "Haven't you got any manners? Give me back that whistle!"

"Do you know what would happen if you blew that whistle?" I shouted. "The police would come!"

"Glory be!" said Ma. "Do you think I don't know that?"

"But we don't want the police!"

"We do, too! Haven't we got a burglar in the house?"

"Yes," I admitted, "but Henry can take care of him."

"Maybe he can, and maybe he can't,"

said Ma. "You give me that whistle. I'm not going to take any chances."

"But, Ma, if the police come, we'll all have to go to the police court, and testify before judges, and be asked questions."

"I don't care if we do!"

"But I care. I think you ought to consider me a little."

"And I think you ought to consider Henry. What do you mean by leaving him alone at the mercy of a burglar? If it was your Pa, you can better believe I'd be with him instead of having hysterics, and snatching police whistles out of my mother's hand. I can't imagine what's got into you, Blanche. Henry may need help this minute."

"I'm sure he doesn't, Ma."

"Well, I'm not sure," said Ma, "but I'm going to be. I'm fond of Henry, even if you ain't. You can stay here or

not, just as you like, but I'm going to Henry."

"You have no right to talk like that," I said. "If Henry needed me, I'd go to him through fire and water, and you know it!"

"Then, why don't you go to him now?"

"I'm going," I said. "Come along."

With that I marched out of the room, Ma after me, and over to Henry's door, where I knocked.

"Who's there?" called Henry.

"It's me," I said—"me and Ma."

"What do you want?"

"Ma thinks you're being murdered by the burglar. Come out in the hall a minute, and be sure and close the door after you."

"There!" I said to Ma, as Henry appeared. "He's all right, just as I said he'd be."

"Where's the burglar?" asked Ma.

"Tell her you've tied him to the bed with ropes," I whispered.

"I've tied him up with ropes, Ma."

"What are you going to do with him?" demanded Ma.

"I'll turn him over to the police to-morrow morning."

"Do you hear that, Blanche? Henry's going to turn the burglar over to the police."

"If I hadn't prevented it, Ma would have blown a police whistle out of the window," I whispered.

"Good Heavens!" said Henry.

"I can't see why you don't have the police in now," said Ma.

"Because we'd have to go with them," I explained, "and we all need sleep. Besides, to-morrow will do just as well."

"I don't like the idea of Henry sleeping in a room with a burglar," said Ma.

"How is Mr. Deane?" I whispered.

"Well, he did what he said he was going to do," said Henry. "Now, Ma, you and Blanche go to bed."

"What I can't understand," said Ma, "is how the burglar got into your bedroom. And what's queerer still, is his coming out into the hall the way he did, for he must have known we were there."

"He came out to surrender," I explained.

"But burglars don't surrender like that. I can't make head or tail of it. If I hadn't seen him with my own eyes, I wouldn't have believed there was any burglar. But I guess you're right about going to bed—it's all hours. Though how I'm going to sleep, knowing there's a burglar in the house, is beyond me. Come on to bed, Blanche."

"In a minute," I said. Then, going up to Henry, I whispered: "Get Mr.

Deane out of the house early, and be sure and have a story ready for Ma, telling how he escaped." And then I kissed him good-night.

"I never passed such a night in my whole life," said Ma, once we were in her room and in bed. "If I ever do go to sleep, which ain't probable, I'll have a nightmare, sure as guns. So if you hear me groaning, Blanche, don't be scared—just wake me up."

"I will," I promised. "Go to sleep, now."

Ma did go to sleep right away, but I didn't. It seemed like I lay awake for hours. And finally, when I did go to sleep, I dreamed of being chased through the streets in my nightgown by a fat man in pink pyjamas. So 'twas me who had the nightmare and not Ma. But even at that, what I dreamed wasn't much worse than what really happened next morning.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN I woke the next morning it was quite late, and Ma was already up. "She's probably getting breakfast," I thought. "I do hope Henry woke early and smuggled Mr. Deane out of the flat."

Still, even if Mr. Deane hadn't escaped yet, it would be easy to let him out the front door while Ma was in the kitchen; so I needn't worry about that. But I did need some clothes, for every stitch I owned, except the nightgown I had on, was in Henry's room.

Of course I could have asked Ma, who was already dressed, to go and get them for me. But, somehow, I felt in my bones that Henry had overslept, and that

Henry has a perfect right to go out on Saturday nights if I let him

Then I went to bed too, for Henry doesn't like me to sit up for him

Mr. Deane was still occupying my twin bed. If that was so, it wouldn't do to send Ma for my clothes. No, I'd have a bath first, and then go and tap on Henry's door myself.

If there's anything more refreshing than a cold bath after a hard night, I'd like to know what it is. Anyway, I felt like a different woman after I'd got through, even if I was afraid to look in the glass for fear I'd discover my hair had turned white. You may laugh as much as you please, but it was a real surprise to me to find my hair was the same as it always was. And considering what I'd been through, I don't see how you can blame me.

On the way down the hall to Henry's room, I glanced in at the dining-room, the door being open. Ma wasn't in sight, but I could hear her moving around in the kitchen, so I knew she was all right.

Our dining-room is quite large, but our kitchen is no bigger than a minute. As a matter of fact, it isn't a separate room at all—just an alcove off the dining-room, lighted by a single window that opens on a fire-escape. But it does very nicely for all that.

Well, Ma was in the kitchen, and there was no use letting her know I was up yet, so I slipped down the hall and tapped at Henry's door. When nobody answered, I was a little worried, and I tapped again; then I knocked good and hard. Nobody answered this time, either, but I wasn't worried any more. It was just as I'd thought; Henry and Mr. Deane had both overslept themselves. Opening the door gently, I peered in.

The room was pretty dark, for all the shades were down, but I could make out that some one was in my bed.

"It must be Henry," I thought. "It wouldn't be likely he'd let Mr. Deane sleep in my bed."

Advancing cautiously into the room, I stumbled over a pair of shoes. I don't know why, but that sort of reassured me, for it was just like Henry to leave his shoes out for people to fall over. By this time, too, I was getting used to the light, and I could see that the man in my bed was Henry, and that— Good gracious! I didn't know what to make of it, but Henry's own bed was empty!

I glanced nervously over my shoulder, half-expecting Mr. Deane to spring out at me from behind the bureau. Or was he hiding in the clothes-closet? Well, if he was, I couldn't help it. Going over to the window, I gave the blind a jerk and it flew up, flooding the room with sunshine; and then I wasn't scared any more. For there's something about sun-

shine that takes the edge off things, and kind of gives you courage. Besides, I knew now what had happened. Henry had woke up early, put Mr. Deane out, and then gone back to bed again. Just the same, it was time Henry was getting up, so I went over and shook him gently.

"What's the matter?" he asked, waking with a start.

"Nothing's the matter."

"Oh, it's you, is it? I thought maybe it was— What are you doing in here?"

"I came in to wake you up. It's nearly nine o'clock."

"Yes, I know—" He was sitting up now, and staring at his own bed.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"Wh—where's Deane?"

"Don't you remember? You put him out, and then went back to bed."

"It's funny," said Henry, "but I don't remember a thing about it."

"You were probably half-asleep at the time," I said.

"But how do you know I put him out?"

"Because he isn't here."

"But I couldn't have put him out. Surely I would remember if I had."

"Then he let himself out," I said, "and good riddance."

"I wonder."

"But, Henry, if he isn't here— Get up and see if he's hiding in the clothes-closet."

"No, he isn't in the clothes-closet," Henry reported, after a thorough search.

"Well, my clothes are," I said, "and I want them."

"It's probably just as you think, dear," said Henry. "He woke up, found himself in a strange place, and managed to steal out and find the front door. And now he's wondering how in the world he got here. Probably he'll

never know just where he spent the night. It must make a man feel mighty queer to find he's spent the night—" Henry stopped all of a sudden, and I saw he was staring at the floor.

"What's the matter now?" I asked.

"Nothing," said Henry. "Nothing—much—only—I say, Blanche, do you know whose shoes those are?"

I looked at the shoes Henry was pointing at. They were the same shoes I'd stumbled over when I'd come into the room. And they *weren't Henry's shoes!*

"Good gracious!" I said. "Mr. Deane has gone off and left his shoes!"

"But has he gone?" said Henry.

"Of course he's gone! The room was dark, and he couldn't find his shoes, so he went without them. I'll bet you'd have done the same if you'd woke up in a strange room with a strange man sleeping beside you in a twin bed. You must

remember Mr. Deane isn't used to twin beds; he practically said so himself. I guess he was so scared he didn't even think of his shoes. Anything to escape, was his motto; I just know it was."

"Well, perhaps," said Henry. "Just the same, I'm going to have a look at the front door."

"You'll find he's slipped the bolt; you see if you don't," I called after him.

But when Henry came back, I knew it was serious. You see, the bolt on the front door was still in place, so Mr. Deane couldn't have left the flat.

"But where can he be?" asked Henry.

"Goodness knows!" I said. "It would be just like him to wander out in the kitchen and scare Ma to death. Come to think of it, I heard some one moving around in the kitchen, and I took it for granted it was Ma. Do run and make sure, Henry!"

As Henry dashed from the room, I sank down on my own bed, my legs weak and trembling. If anything had happened to Ma, I'd never forgive myself. I was never so thankful in my life as when Henry returned and reported that though she hadn't seen him, he'd seen Ma, and she was all right.

"But where can he be? He certainly wasn't in Ma's room, unless—"

"Unless what, dear?"

"He might be in there now," I said, "hiding in Ma's clothes-closet."

This started Henry off again. But in a minute he came back with the news that nobody was hiding in Ma's room, or in her clothes-closet, either.

Then I had an awful thought, and I kind of groaned.

"What's the matter?" asked Henry. "Are you ill?"

"Not yet," I said, "but I'm liable

to be if— Oh, Henry, supposing—"

"Yes?"

"Oh, it's so terrible!"

"What's too terrible?"

"I just can't say it. You know that—that laundry basket in—in the bathroom?"

"That's so," said Henry. "That basket's big enough to hold a man."

"It isn't!" I screamed. "I just know it isn't! And you've no right to say so."

"But I can't see—"

"Maybe you can't see, but I can! I'd have you know, Henry Hawkins, that I've just finished taking a bath in the bathroom!"

At that Henry began to laugh.

"You get out of here!" I said.

"Do you want me to look in the laundry basket? Is that it?"

"Yes," I said. "I want you to look in

the laundry basket, and in the china-closet off the dining-room, and everywhere else you can think of."

"All right," said Henry, and started to go. But I wouldn't let him.

"You just wait a minute," I said. "I don't care where you find Mr. Deane; but if you do find him, and tell me you found him in the laundry basket, I'll divorce you as sure as my name's Blanche Hawkins! Now, go!"

CHAPTER IX

WHILE Henry was looking for Mr. Deane, I did up my hair and dressed myself, so when he returned I was clothed and in my right mind, so to speak.

"Well?" I said.

"If I were to tell you I found Mr. Deane in the laundry basket in the bathroom—" he began.

"I wouldn't believe you."

"And you'd be quite right, dear. He wasn't in the laundry basket."

"Where was he, then?"

"He wasn't anywhere, so far as I could discover."

"But, Henry, he must be somewhere."

"I'm not denying he's somewhere. What I do say is that he's not in our flat."

"But if he didn't go out the front door—"

"You've forgotten the fire-escape," said Henry.

"Good gracious! You don't mean to tell me he went down the fire-escape?"

"Either down it, or up it."

"But I can't see any object in going up the fire-escape."

"Or down it, either," said Henry. "It ends a good twenty-five feet from the ground. I looked out the kitchen window, but I didn't see anybody stretched out in the court below."

"Perhaps the poor man is up on the roof this minute."

"If he is, he can stay there," said Henry. "There's another funny thing connected with it, too. Ma declares—"

"Oh, you've seen Ma, then! Did you tell her Mr. Deane has escaped?"

"No. I told her I got up early and took him over to the police station. And when she asked me how early, I said 'six o'clock.' "

"It's perfectly awful the way we've been lying to poor Ma," I said. "But I don't see what else we could have done."

"No," Henry agreed. "But I wish I'd told her a different lie, for now she declares there's another burglar in the flat."

"Another burglar? What do you mean?"

"Well, it seems she got up about eight o'clock, went out into the kitchen, lighted the gas range, and put some water on to boil to make herself a cup of coffee; then she filled a pitcher with Great Bear Water, put it on the sideboard in the din-

ing-room, and then went in to take her bath. And when she went back, the water pitcher was gone."

"Gone?"

"It had disappeared completely."

"But how could the water pitcher disappear?"

"That's what Ma wanted to know. She said the first thing she did was to look in and see if we were both asleep, and she must have looked in here, for she mentioned my being in your bed and not in my own."

"We could have pretended we were asleep," I argued. "I'll just tell Ma I got up and took the water pitcher."

"But that wouldn't be true," said Henry.

"I know it wouldn't," I said. "But I've already told so many lies, one more won't make any difference."

"If you told that lie, it would make a

difference, for you'd have to produce the water pitcher, and you can't."

"Then you think Mr. Deane stole it?"

"No," said Henry, "I know he didn't."

"Then how on earth—?"

"I've figured it out this way. When Mr. Deane woke up, what he'd naturally want more than anything in the world would be a drink of water—lots of water."

"Yes."

"So the first thing he did was to go and hunt for some. And he found the pitcher, full of water, on the sideboard in the dining-room."

"Yes, but I don't see—"

"I'm coming to that. After he'd found the pitcher, he picked it up and began drinking out of it."

"He shouldn't have done that," I said —"it isn't good manners."

"No one ever lets good manners interfere with a great thirst," said Henry. "Anyway, that's what he did. And while he was drinking, Ma opened a door, or something, and it scared him so he dropped the pitcher."

"You make me tired," I said. "To hear you talk, anybody would think I was Doctor Watson, and you were Sherlock Holmes. I don't believe Mr. Deane did anything of the sort."

"But I can prove it," said Henry, handing me a piece of jagged glass. "Take a look at that."

I examined the piece of glass carefully, and to tell the truth it did look as if it might have been part of our water pitcher. "Where did you find it?" I asked.

"On the floor under the sideboard. Also, there was a wet spot on the carpet."

"I hope you didn't show it to Ma," I said.

"No. She was in the kitchen when I discovered it. She seemed so sure someone had stolen the water pitcher that I thought I'd better investigate."

"But what happened to the other pieces of the pitcher?"

"Why, when Mr. Deane dropped the pitcher, he probably dodged out into the kitchen where he noticed the fire-escape. Then, as nobody came, he went back, gathered up the broken glass, and disposed of it somehow or other; only he failed to see the piece I found, it being under the sideboard. And then he departed by way of the fire-escape. Now, am I or am I not, a Sherlock Holmes?"

"I do believe you're right," I said. "I must say I think it was awfully clever of you to piece things together the way you did." I gazed at Henry admiringly.

"It's more than likely that Mr. Deane's up on the roof," said Henry. "It would be a mad thing to do, to drop twenty-five feet to the court below; he'd probably break his legs if he did. Besides, the janitor or his wife would have been bound to see him."

"And he'd have to go home in his stocking feet; and then what would his wife say?"

"He could buy a pair of shoes, if it comes to that."

"You've forgotten it's Sunday," I said. "Though, he might find a shoe store open on Third Avenue, I doubt it. He'd have been lots better off if he'd stayed here. But I suppose last night is a complete blank to him, and all he thought of this morning was that he was in a strange place, and must escape somehow. How are we going to return his shoes to him, Henry?"

"I'm blessed if I know. If he doesn't remember about last night, I believe it would be kinder to keep his shoes than to send them to him. For sending them would prove we knew his name and address, and that might worry him."

"Anyway," I said, "there's no use borrowing trouble. The thing to do now is for you to take your bath and dress yourself, while I go out and set the table, and help Ma."

I found Ma seated by the window in the kitchen, looking at the comic supplement of the Sunday paper, which had come up, with the cream, on the dumb waiter.

"Why, good-morning, Ma," I said. "What's new with the Katzenjammer Kids this morning?"

"They're scandalous!" said Ma. "I don't see why newspapers print such things."

"To amuse people who pretend they

don't like them—like you and me, Ma."

"I don't like them," said Ma. "I don't believe in Sunday newspapers, anyway; back home I never allow one in my house. Did Henry tell you about the burglar's stealing the water pitcher?"

"Yes, Ma."

"Two burglars in twenty-four hours is a good many, even for New York, it seems to me. Do you often have burglars, Blanche?"

"Not any oftener than we can help," I replied. "What are you doing with that carving knife in your lap, Ma?—and that police whistle tied around your neck?"

"Oh, I just thought I'd have them handy, just in case!"

"In case of what, Ma?"

"The way I figure it out," said Ma, "a burglar may drop in any minute. And why shouldn't they, with ladders

up the back of every house, and little platforms for them to rest on? No wonder there are so many burglars in New York; everything's made so easy for them."

"But you've got to have fire-escapes, Ma; it's the law. I'm going to set the table now, and you can put the coffee on, and fry the ham, and boil the eggs."

With that I went into the dining-room, opened the door of the china-closet, which is big enough to keep lots of things in besides china, got out the breakfast dishes, and set the table. Then I opened the sideboard drawer to take out the knives, and forks, and napkins. And then— Well, I could hardly believe my eyes; but as sure as I live, there, in plain sight, on top of the napkins, lay a pile of broken glass! So that is how Mr. Deane had disposed of the broken water pitcher. Closing the drawer hastily, I

ran in to tell Henry what I'd found; but he wasn't in his room. No, of course not; he was in the bathroom taking his bath.

Then it occurred to me it was silly to let Ma go on thinking there'd been a second burglar. One was bad enough. Why couldn't I tell her—? It wasn't true, of course, but certainly it would be better to tell her a hundred lies than to have her expecting a burglar any minute, with a carving knife handy, and a police whistle hung around her neck. So I went back into the kitchen where she was breaking an egg for the coffee, and said: "Ma, I've just remembered something. I had a funny dream last night; or it might have been this morning, for all I know."

"What was it about?"

"I dreamed I was thirsty."

"Dreamed you were what?"

"Thirsty, Ma."

"Oh!" said Ma. "I thought you said 'thirty.' Well, I don't see anything funny about that."

"Just you wait. In my dream, I got out of bed, and walked into the dining-room."

"You did used to walk in your sleep when you were a little tyke, but I guess you outgrew it long ago."

"I wonder," I said. "I dreamed I got up, went into the dining-room, took up the water pitcher to pour myself out a drink, and somehow the pitcher slipped out of my hand and broke on the floor. And then I thought (you see, I imagined I was a little girl again) 'Ma will be awfully mad at me for breaking her best water pitcher.' So I picked up the pieces from the floor, and hid them somewhere; only I can't remember where."

"I should hope not," said Ma. "It was only a dream, you know."

"But was it? Maybe I did get up? and maybe I did break the pitcher? Come on in the dining-room, Ma, and I'll see if I can think where I put the pieces." So we went into the dining-room, and I made Ma show me where she'd set the pitcher.

"That's just what I thought," I said. "And I dropped it here. Do look, Ma; the carpet's wet where I dropped the pitcher!"

"Goodness sakes!" said Ma, stooping and examining the carpet. "It *is* wet, as sure as I live."

"And then," I went on, as if I was having a vision, "and then I picked up the pieces of the pitcher, and put them— put them— Look in that drawer!" I commanded suddenly, pointing to the drawer in the sideboard. Ma did, and of

course she found what was left of the water pitcher.

"Great Land of Goshen!" she cried. "It's just as you dreamed it, Blanche! There's no getting around it; you must have walked in your sleep."

Though it was wicked of me, I guess I was almost as proud of making Ma believe I'd broken the water pitcher in my sleep, as Henry was of solving the mystery of what had become of it in the first place; I couldn't wait to tell Henry what I'd done. So I said: "Now you needn't worry about burglars any more, Ma. I'll go and tell Henry to hurry up, or he'll be late to breakfast."

It says in the Bible that pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. It certainly does—sometimes. For I was no more out in the hall than the door-bell rang.

I pushed the button in the hall, heard

the front door downstairs slam, and then looked in Henry's room. But of course he wasn't there; he was still in the bathroom taking his bath. I wondered who on earth could be ringing our bell.

I was soon to find out. For when I opened the door, I was confronted by a policeman, and a stout lady in black silk who informed me, in a voice as cold and hard as an icicle, that she was Mrs. Henry Deane, and that she'd come for her husband.

CHAPTER X

TO say that I was struck all of a heap would be putting it mildly. Mrs. Henry Deane—and a policeman! A policeman—and Mrs. Henry Deane! How on earth had Mrs. Deane found out where her husband had spent the night? And why the policeman? Did he think we—? Did Mrs. Deane imagine that I—?

"I've come for my husband," Mrs. Deane repeated in a voice that made me hate her. "And I advise you to produce him at once, or I'll—"

"You'll what?" I asked. "You talk like your husband was a rabbit, and I could do sleight of hand with a stovepipe

hat. I can't produce your husband for two reasons; in the first place, I doubt if he is your husband, and in the second place, he isn't here."

"I'm sorry, mum," said the policeman, "but there was a telegram sent last night about this lady's husband, and the record at the telegraph office shows that it was sent by a Mr. Henry Hawkins. Is he your husband?"

"Yes, he is!"

"Then you know something about Mr. Deane?"

"I know a lot more about him than I want to," I replied. "When my husband came home last night, he found him asleep, and the worse for drink, on the landing out there, and being a kind-hearted man—"

"How dare you say my husband was the worse for drink?"

"Being a kind-hearted man," I con-

tinued, "instead of turning him over to the police like he deserved, my husband brought him in and put him to bed. And to show what sort of a man Mr. Deane is, he skipped out this morning without so much as saying 'thank you,' and broke our best water pitcher, to boot. That's the kind he is!"

"A likely story! Do you know what I believe, officer? I believe this woman and her alleged husband enticed my Henry here to rob him."

"How dare you say such a thing!" I cried.

"Now, now, ladies," said the policeman.

"You keep quiet!" I said. "There's only one lady here, and that's me. You're a pretty specimen, ain't you? to bring a woman like this to my flat, and stand by while she insults me."

"I'm sorry, mum, but I was detailed

on this case, and I guess I'll have to see it through."

"Well, you can't see it through any too quick to suit me. Here's my husband, now," I said, as the bathroom door at the end of the hall opened, and Henry appeared in his bathrobe. "Oh, Henry! Come here!"

"But I can't!" cried Henry, dodging back into the bathroom, and only sticking his head out. "I'm not dressed for company."

"These people ain't company, they're intruders. This woman says she's Mrs. Henry Deane."

"Good gracious!"

"I'll have you know I *am* Mrs. Henry Deane!"

"And I've just told her how you found Mr. Deane—who may, or may not be her husband—out on the landing last night, the worse for drink."

"Oh," said Henry, "you told her that!"

"Yes. And I also told her how you brought him in, like the kind-hearted man you are, and tucked him in my bed."

"In *your* bed?" gasped Mrs. Deane.

"In my bed," I replied firmly. "If it will comfort you any, I don't mind telling you that my husband and I have twin beds; also, that I slept in my mother's bed last night."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Deane.

"And now," I went on, "this smart Aleck policeman, and this woman who says she's married to Mr. Deane, want to search the flat. At least, that's what I suppose they want to do."

"But Mr. Deane isn't here," said Henry; "he's gone."

"I've told them that till I'm black in the face, but they won't believe me."

At that, Henry came out of the bath-

room and strided towards the policeman. "Look here!" he said. "When my wife says a thing is so, it's so."

Women *are* funny. I wouldn't have missed seeing Henry walk up to that policeman the way he did for anything in the world. He looked so brave, and so ready to fight for me! According to him, I always told the truth, and he'd punch any policeman's head who said I didn't. Yet I'd just told a whopper about his finding Mr. Deane on the landing, and he knew it. What I'd said about his tucking Mr. Deane in my bed wasn't true, either, for Mr. Deane hadn't been in my bed at all. No, I only said that for the satisfaction of seeing Mrs. Deane squirm. Well, she certainly squirmed.

"What do you mean by doubting my wife's word?" demanded Henry.

"I don't doubt her word, Mr. Haw-

kins," replied the policeman. "I wouldn't be here now, only—"

"Only what?" snapped Henry.

"Well, you see—" He pointed helplessly at Mrs. Deane.

"No, it isn't his fault," I said. "He's been as polite as possible."

"I'm sure if I've been mistaken—" Mrs. Deane began. "Not that I believe for a minute I have," she added grimly.

"If seeing's believing," I said, "you'll soon be convinced that my husband and I didn't entice Mr. Deane, who may, or may not be your husband, here to rob him. Perhaps you'd like to inspect the bed he slept in. I think it will interest you, for it's a twin bed, and you don't have twin beds at home; or so your husband, if he is your husband, told mine. This way, please."

Of course it wasn't polite of me to talk to Mrs. Deane the way I did, but I simply

couldn't stand that woman. Though I'm ordinarily good-natured, I've as sharp a tongue as the next when I'm r'iled; and I guess I was even madder than Ma had been the night before when I'd locked her in her bedroom. As if Henry and I were the kind to entice people into our flat and rob them! So I led the way, very high and mighty, into our bedroom, and once inside, began to explain the order of events in about the way the megaphone man does on a rubberneck wagon.

"Before you," I said, "you will notice the two twin beds already mentioned. Mr. Deane, who may or may not have been the husband of the—er—injured party, slept in that one" (which wasn't true; he'd slept in the other) "and my husband, Mr. Hawkins, slept here. Now, after carefully looking under both beds, under the table—under the bureau, too,

if you like—we will search the clothes-closet."

You see, I thought I'd make Mrs. Deane ashamed of herself; but if I did, she didn't show it. She did look under both beds, and she did rummage in the clothes-closet.

"Now," I said, as Mrs. Deane came out of the clothes-closet, "if you are satisfied that the person, who may or may not be your husband, isn't here, we'll form in line and move on to my mother's bedroom."

In the meantime Henry and the policeman had been standing by a window, the policeman looking sheepish, and Henry uncomfortable.

"I say, Blanche," said Henry, "you—er— Is it necessary to rub it in like that?"

"It's just as necessary as it is to search our flat for a man who isn't in it,"

I replied. And then, suddenly, I saw something that made me almost faint. I wondered if Mrs. Deane would see it, too. I hoped to goodness she wouldn't!

Of course you think it was Mr. Deane's shoes I saw. Well, it wasn't. His shoes were there, all right, and in plain sight, too. But it's a wise wife—or a foolish one—who knows her husband's shoes by sight. No, it wasn't his shoes; it was something else.

"Are you ready now?" I asked, my throat so dry I could hardly talk. "Are you ready now to inspect my mother's room?"

I've already told you that I believe there are such things as thought waves. I also believed, once, that in order to receive them you had to be in sympathy with the sender. Certainly Mrs. Deane and I were as out of sympathy with each

other as two people very well could be. And yet—

I suppose when people antagonize you the way that woman did me, they're lots closer to you, mentally, than some people are that you really like. Anyway, that's how I've figured it out. For just as sure as there's a blue sky above, the moment I began wishing she wouldn't look where I didn't want her to, Mrs. Deane began catching my thought waves.

"Are you ready now to inspect my mother's room?" I asked.

"No," she replied, "I'm not. I feel there's something— What's this?" she demanded suddenly, stooping to pick up a green leather wallet which lay by the chair beside Henry's bed. "What's this?"

"Oh, that?" I said. "Why, that—"

"If is isn't Mr. Deane's wallet!" said Henry, coming forward.

"How did it get here?" demanded Mrs. Deane in a stern voice.

"It must have fallen out of his pocket," said Henry.

"How do you know it's his wallet?" asked the policeman.

"Because I took it out of his pocket last night to verify the address he gave me. You see, in the state he was in—"

"Stop!" commanded Mrs. Deane. "I won't have my husband maligned! Is it likely that my husband would go off without his wallet?"

"Just as likely as that he'd go off without his shoes," I replied.

"Who says he went without his shoes?"

"I do," I said. "If you don't believe it, here they are." And with that, I walked over, picked up Mr. Deane's shoes, and handed them to his wife.

"Are those your husband's shoes?" asked the policeman.

"How do I know?" answered Mrs. Deane. "They look like his shoes, but—"

"They are his shoes," said Henry. "And I leave it to you, Mr. Officer, if a man who went off without his shoes wouldn't be likely to forget his wallet, and maybe his pants."

"How dare you say that my husband would forget his—"

"I didn't say he would," Henry replied, "I only said he might."

"Officer! I believe these dreadful people have murdered my husband!"

"Do you hear that, Henry? She's calling us murderers, now! Good gracious! What's that?"

"It sounds like some one was blowing a police whistle in the dining-room," said Henry.

"They are!" I cried. "It's Ma! Hurry!" And with that, I dashed out of the bedroom, Henry, Mrs. Deane, and the policeman after me.

CHAPTER XI

OF course I knew exactly what had happened; Mr. Deane had got tired of staying up on the roof all alone by himself. Perhaps his brain had cleared, too, and he remembered now that we'd treated him kindly. Anyway, he'd decided to come back to our flat, and coming back, he'd run into Ma and scared the life out of her; and Ma had blown her police whistle—

All this popped into my head the minute I heard the police whistle, so I practically knew there was nothing to be scared about. Just the same, I was mighty glad to escape from our bedroom; Mrs. Deane was getting too awful. And to think that it was me that made Henry

go out and send her that telegram. It was like lending a helping hand to a stranger, and then having the stranger turn around and bite you. She would call Henry and me murderers, would she? When she'd seen her husband without his shoes, and a morning-after head on him, maybe she'd think different. Murderers! The idea!

So, you see, when I dashed out of our bedroom, I wasn't in a panic at all, though even Henry thought I was. But I did want to make Ma stop blowing that police whistle. If she kept that up, she'd rouse the whole neighborhood, including the fat man in pink pyjamas, who'd seen me in my nightgown the night before. If there was one person in the world, besides Mrs. Deane, that I never wanted to see again as long as I lived, it was that fat man; and probably I'd have to pass him on the stairs to-

morrow. Well, if worst came to worst, we could pack up and move to another flat; and we would, too.

It's funny how fast your mind works sometimes. Here I was planning Henry's and my future in another flat, and feeling pleased over what Mrs. Deane was going to see when she followed me into the dining-room—and I hadn't reached the dining-room yet. And when I did get there, if things weren't exactly as I expected to find them, all I can say is that mortal man isn't infallible, and mortal woman even less so; for when I burst into the dining-room, there wasn't any Mr. Deane in sight. Ma was there, though—well, I should say she was!—waving a carving knife in one hand, and blowing a police whistle with the other.

"Here! Stop that, Ma!" I yelled. "What's the matter?"

"Matter?" cried Ma, who was as red as a turkey cock from blowing the whistle. "Matter? That's what I'd like to know. Here I've been blowing this police whistle for a good ten minutes, and nobody came. Are you all deaf, or what?"

"No," I said, "we ain't deaf, but we're liable to be if you keep on blowing that whistle. We came as quick as we could."

"Like fun you did! Why, the policeman got here as soon as you, and I wouldn't wonder if he run a block. Who's that woman with him, Blanche?"

"That's his wife, Ma."

"I'm not," said Mrs. Deane.

"Well," said Ma, turning to the policeman, "I'm glad you're here, though there wasn't any need to hurry like you did. I've got him, safe and sound."

"Got who, Ma?" asked Henry.

"The burglar, you gump! What do you suppose I was blowing that whistle for?"

"I thought maybe you were frightened, Ma."

"Not likely," said Ma. "Give me a good, sharp carving knife, and I'm a match for any burglar, I guess."

"But, where is the burglar?" asked the policeman.

"He wants to know where the burglar is," I screamed.

"Why," said Ma, "I thought you knew; he's in the china-closet. I locked him in."

"But where did he come from?" asked Henry.

"He climbed up the fire-escape," said Ma. "I'd just gone into my room to get a handkerchief, and when I came back I found him in the dining-room. Luckily, I'd taken the carving knife with me, so

I had it handy. I sprang at him, and told him if he uttered a sound I'd lay him out cold; and then I marched him into the china-closet, and locked him in. Now, I guess the policeman can do the rest. I've done enough, it seems to me, if I do say so as shouldn't."

"I should think you had!" said Henry. "You'd better unlock the door, officer, and arrest the burglar."

"Just a minute," I said. "It isn't really a burglar; Ma's mistaken."

"How do you know it isn't a burglar?" asked the policeman.

"Because," I said, "when Mr. Deane left the flat, he didn't leave by the front door, but by the fire-escape; and as the fire-escape doesn't lead anywhere except to the roof, it's probably him come back to get his shoes."

"I don't believe it," said Mrs. Deane. "If my husband did leave by the fire-

escape, it was because he was afraid of being murdered."

"Murdered your grandfather's hind leg! Mr. Deane left by the fire-escape because he didn't have any idea where he was, and because the front door was locked and bolted, and I had the key."

"You see," Henry explained, "he woke up before I did, and stole—"

"He didn't!" cried Mrs. Deane. "How dare you say my husband stole?"

"Stole out of the flat," said Henry.

"He just as good as stole, though; he broke our best water pitcher. If you don't believe it, I'll show you the pieces," I said. But before I could open the sideboard drawer, Ma demanded to know why the policeman didn't arrest the burglar.

"Have I got to do everything?" she asked. "I will say the New York police are mighty quick in answering a call, but

as for doing anything after they've arrived, give me the town constable at Centerville every time."

"Yes," said Henry to the policeman, "why don't you do something?"

At that the policeman went over to the china-closet and knocked.

"Come in," said a muffled voice.

"I'm coming," said the policeman. "But I want to warn you that I'm an officer of the law." And with that he drew a revolver from under his coat.

"Now," I said to Mrs. Deane, "we'll see whether my husband and I are murderers or not."

"And we'll see that it isn't my husband in there," she replied.

"Stand back, all of you," said the policeman; "I'm going to open the door." And he did. "Now, come out of there!" he ordered.

The man in the china-closet obeyed.

And then— Well, then the whole world seemed to go black. For it wasn't Mr. Deane. It was—merciful Heavens!—it was the fat man from downstairs!

When I came to, I was lying on the couch in the dining-room, with my feet higher than my head, and Henry sprinkling cold water all over my clean collar.

"What's happened?" I said. "Is it raining?"

"No," said Henry, "you fainted." And then I remembered.

The fat man was still in the dining-room, talking to the policeman and Mrs. Deane. Though he had a bathrobe over it, and slippers on his feet, he was still wearing pink pyjamas, and was saying: "I was just out of bed, and on my way to the bathroom, when I discovered the burglar. I chased him through the flat, out a window, and up the fire-escape. Yes, he came in here, and I came after

him. Then that she-dragon attacked me with a carving knife, and locked me in there."

"Do you hear what he's saying, Henry?" I asked.

"Yes, dear."

"Well," I said, sitting up, "I feel better now."

"Don't you get up yet, Blanche," ordered Ma, who was hovering near. "You lie quiet."

"Oh, I'm all right!" I said, though I did feel weak and trembly.

"That policeman hasn't arrested the burglar yet," complained Ma. "I shouldn't wonder if he was one of those grafting policeman like you read about in the papers. Don't you let that burglar buy himself free, Henry."

"No, Ma, I won't," Henry promised.

At that I got up, and with Henry's help walked over to where Mrs. Deane,

and the policeman, and the fat man were standing.

"I heard what you said about the burglar in your flat," I began, turning to the fat man, "but he isn't really a burglar. He's a poor, unfortunate man who drinks too much, and I hope you won't have him arrested."

"But he ought to be arrested," declared the fat man, "breaking into my flat the way he did, and making a laughing-stock of me."

"I don't ask it for myself, but for this lady's sake," I said, pointing to Mrs. Deane. "The man who broke into your flat is this poor creature's husband."

"He isn't, either!" snapped Mrs. Deane.

"Oh!" I said. "Then you're not married to Mr. Deane, after all? In that case, officer—"

"You know what I mean!" cried Mrs.

Deane. "I mean my husband doesn't break into people's houses, and doesn't take too much to drink. If there's a burglar in this flat, it isn't my husband, you can depend on that!"

"You see," I explained to the fat man, "the poor lady has lost her husband."

"I understand," he said; "a widow, and not quite—" he tapped his forehead, significantly.

"I'm not!" screamed Mrs. Deane. "This woman's a murderer! Her husband's a murderer! Her mother attacks people with carving knives!"

"Mad as a hatter!" murmured the fat man. "She ought to be in an asylum."

"How dare you, sir!" demanded Mrs. Deane.

"Humor her," I whispered; "it's the only thing to do."

"Stop your fooling, Blanche," said Henry. "This is getting serious. If

Mr. Deane is in the flat, we've got to find him."

"Well, go ahead and find him," I said. "Who's preventing you?"

CHAPTER XII

AFTER Henry, and the fat man, and the policeman had left the dining-room to search for Mr. Deane, Ma, thinking to be polite, walked over to Mrs. Deane, who she still thought was the policeman's wife, asked her if she always accompanied her husband when he went out to catch burglars.

"No, I don't!" snapped Mrs. Deane.

"What did she say, Blanche?"

"She says she always goes with him when she can, Ma."

"Now, look here!" said Mrs. Deane. "This has gone far enough!"

"Just what I think," I replied. "Ma, did you leave anything on the gas range? Something's burning!"

"Land's sakes!" said Ma. "I've gone and forgot the ham!" With that she dived into the kitchen just as Henry, and the policeman, and the fat man came in from the hall dragging the big, covered laundry basket between them.

"What are you bringing that in here for?" I asked.

"It's evidence," said the policeman.

"He's inside it!" shouted the fat man.

"What?" I gasped.

"I'm sorry, Blanche," said Henry, with a twinkle in his eye, "but I'm forced to tell you that Mr. Deane was hiding in the laundry basket."

"*Is* hiding," corrected the fat man.

"But, why doesn't he get out?"

"Because," said the policeman, "I told him if he did, I'd shoot the daylights out of him."

"It was my idea," explained the fat man. "We've got him so nicely crated

that it seemed a shame not to ship him to the police station the way he is."

"I suppose you've planned to label him 'Burglar. Handle With Care,'" I said.

"No," admitted the fat man. "Just the same, it's a good idea."

"It's good as far as it goes," I said, "but it goes too far; that laundry basket is not to leave this house. You ought to be ashamed of yourself to think of treating the poor man that's inside like that!"

"Oh, thank you!" came in a trembling voice from inside the basket.

At the sound of that voice, Mrs. Deane went as white as a sheet. "Henry!" she gasped. "Henry!"

"It's your wife, Mr. Deane," I said.

There was a dead silence, followed by a groan from the basket.

"You can get out of the basket now, if you want to," I said.

"Don't want to get out," said Mr. Deane.

"Henry Deane, you stop making a fool of yourself, and get out of that basket!" commanded Mrs. Deane.

"All right, my love, if you insist." With that the cover flew off the basket, and the poor man stood up, looking like a balloonist who'd lost everything in the world but the basket of his balloon.

"Ha, ha!" roared the fat man. "That's funny!"

"Keep quiet!" said Henry. "Don't you think, Blanche, that we'd better withdraw, and leave Mr. and Mrs. Deane alone?"

"Oh, please don't!" begged Mr. Deane.

"You get out of that basket!" said Mrs. Deane.

"I won't!" said Mr. Deane, with unexpected firmness. "I'll have you know,

Josie, that I've passed a most uncomfortable night."

"Serves you right!" said Mrs. Deane. "You get out of that basket, and come along home."

"Land of love!" cried Ma, coming in from the kitchen. "What's that man doing in your laundry basket, Blanche?"

"He—he's measuring it for a lining," I said. "Be quiet, Ma!"

"If you think I've been enjoying myself," Mr. Deane began—

"No," said my Henry, "he hasn't enjoyed himself. I'll swear to that."

"What's more," said Mr. Deane, "I won't be ordered about."

"Quite right," said the fat man. "I'm a widower, myself; but I remember—"

"I've undergone the greatest mental anguish," continued Mr. Deane. "Last night, when I thought you had twins—"

"Me? Twins? He's lost his mind," said Mrs. Deane, turning in a dazed sort of way to me.

"And no wonder," I replied. "He's had a terrible experience. I'm sure some one must have given him knock-out drops."

"Yes," said Mr. Deane, eagerly. "I remember, now. Knock-out drops—they gave me knock-out drops."

"So you see," I said, "you couldn't blame him, Mrs. Deane."

"But it—it's all so—so strange," she faltered.

"Life is always strange, dear madam," said the fat man.

"There's one thing I think you ought to do for your wife's sake," I said severely.

"I'll do anything you suggest," declared the grateful Mr. Deane.

"It will be hard to do," I said, "but

I fear it's necessary. I think you ought to resign from the Elks."

"I will," promised Mr. Deane. "I pledge you my word, I will." Unfastening the Elk emblem from the lapel of his coat, he extended it solemnly, and I took it and handed it to his wife, who looked mighty tickled to get it.

"Oh, Henry!" said Mrs. Deane, quite overcome.

"It is nothing," said Mr. Deane. "I would do far more than that for you, Josie dear."

"Then get out of that basket, and take me home."

"I'm sorry, my love, but I— As a matter of fact, I—I haven't any shoes."

"They are in my bedroom," said Henry—"with your wallet. Come with me." And Mr. Deane climbed out of the laundry basket, and he and Mrs. Deane followed Henry out of the room.

"Well," said the policeman, "I don't see as you need me any longer."

"No," I said. "You can go now, if you like. Just let yourself out the front door. Good-morning."

"As for myself," said the fat man, when the policeman had gone, "I must ask your permission to make my exit through your kitchen window. Otherwise, I can't get into my flat, for I came off without my keys."

"Certainly," I said. "And thank you very much for coming to our assistance last night."

"Don't mention it," said the fat man, with a polite bow. "Good-morning, ladies."

All this while Ma had been looking on kind of dazed. But after the fat man had disappeared through the kitchen window, she wanted to know what it was all about.

"What did you let the burglar escape for?" she demanded, meaning the fat man.

"Oh, pshaw, Ma!" I replied. "He wasn't a burglar! He's a neighbor of ours who lives in the flat directly underneath. You see, there was a burglar in the flat, and he chased him up the fire-escape. He thought the burglar came in our window, but he probably went up on the roof."

"But if there's a burglar on the roof, why didn't you tell the policeman about his being up there?"

"I was going to, Ma, only the man who came in to measure the laundry basket told us that the burglar on the roof had already been captured by another policeman."

"Great grief!" said Ma. "These New York policemen are certainly wonders. Did you notice that man in the

laundry basket didn't have any shoes on when he got out?"

"As if I'd let a man get into my laundry basket with his shoes on," I said. "You'd better look after the breakfast, Ma. Here's Henry, and he's starved to death."

"Thank Heaven, that's over!" said Henry, dropping into a chair. "Blanche, why in the world did you make such a point of having Mr. Deane resign from the Elks?"

"Because last night he told me he didn't really belong to 'em, and only wore that Elk button for his wife's benefit, so he'd have an excuse to go out Saturday nights."

"Oh!" said Henry. "Has it occurred to you what a lucky man Mr. Deane is?"

"How do you mean lucky?"

"Why, his stumbling into our flat the way he did, and his getting into my bed."

"I don't see anything so lucky about that," I said.

"Well, I do," said Henry.

"Oh!" I said. "You mean—?"

"Yes," said Henry. "I mean it was lucky for Mr. Deane—mighty lucky! that you bought those twin beds."

END

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 125 757 5